

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Sixtieth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 6 and 7, 1990



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# THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTIETH SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 160th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7, 1990. The general priesthood session was held in the Tabernacle on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

*The First Presidency:* <sup>1</sup>Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

*The Council of the Twelve:* Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks,

Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, and Carlos E. Asay

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Gene R. Cook,<sup>1</sup> Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasland, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, and Robert E. Wells

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, H. Verlan Andersen, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, Monte J. Brough, Waldo P. Call, Helio da Rocha Camargo, George I. Cannon, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, LeGrand R. Curtis,<sup>1</sup> Robert K. Dellenbach, Lloyd P. George, Francis M. Gibbons, F. Melvin Hammond, George R. Hill III, Harold G. Hillam, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, John R. Lasater, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin, Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, Glen L. Rudd, Gardner H. Russell, Robert E. Sackley, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrell A. Woolsey

*The Presiding Bishopric:* Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace

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<sup>1</sup>President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler were excused due to illness.

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, presidents of stakes and their counselors, presidents of temples, bish-

ops of wards, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

## FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "The Morning Breaks" without announcement. President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 160th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, continues to recover from recent surgery but will be unable to attend the sessions of this conference. He will enjoy them by means of television in his room in the hospital. He has asked me to express his gratitude to the members of the Church worldwide for your faith and prayers in his behalf.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled

in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Russell M. Nelson, Jacob de Jager, and W. Eugene Hansen are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Benson and Elders Derek A. Cuthbert and Clinton L. Cutler, who are excused because of illness. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks." They will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Robert L. Backman, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

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The chorus sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Robert L. Backman offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, it has been customary for the President of the Church to speak at the opening of the conference. President Benson has asked that I say a few words on his behalf. In doing so, I quote his own language.

### This work will go forward

Said he: "I love this great work, the greatest work in all the world. I love my brethren and sisters wherever you may reside, and I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you."

"If you will follow the admonitions of the Lord and heed the counsel of His chosen servants in their callings as prophets, seers, and revelators, I promise you that love at home and obedience to parents will increase; faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel and they will gain power and strength to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them. Each of our homes may veritably become a little heaven on earth" ("Foundations for Family Solidarity," *Children's Friend*, Apr. 1957, p. 26).

"With all my soul I testify that this work will go forward till every land and people have had opportunity to accept our message. Barriers will come down for us to accomplish this mission, and some of us will see this done. Our Heav-

enly Father will cause conditions in the world to change so that His gospel can penetrate every border" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 174).

"As we live the commandments of God, we can look forward with joyful anticipation to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and know that through our efforts we are worthy, with our loved ones, to dwell in his presence for all eternity. Surely nothing is too hard to gain this great goal. We cannot let down for a moment. We must prove, every day of our lives, that we are willing to do the will of the Lord—to spread the restored gospel, to bear testimony to the world, to share the gospel with others" (in Conference Report, Tokyo Japan Area Conference 1975, p. 57).

"God bless you, my beloved brethren and sisters, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

Such are the words of our beloved leader Ezra Taft Benson. I am confident that I speak for every member of the Church within the sound of my voice when I say to him, "Our dear friend and leader, our President and prophet, we love you. May the blessings of the Lord rest upon you to give you strength according to your need."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Ordinance work for the dead

One hundred and fifty years ago this week, the Lord revealed to His prophet Joseph Smith sublime doctrine concerning the sacred ordinance of baptism. That light came when other Christian churches taught that death irrevocably, eternally, determined the destiny of the soul. The baptized were rewarded with endless joy. All others faced eternal torment, without hope

of redemption. The Lord's revelation that baptism could be performed vicariously for the dead, through proper priesthood authority, preserved the justice of His statement, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Vicarious baptism also mercifully provides this ordinance for all worthy deceased who have not received it through proper priesthood authority.

This glorious doctrine is another witness of the all-encompassing nature of the atonement of Jesus Christ. He has made salvation available to every repentant soul. His was a vicarious atonement that conquered death. He permits the worthy deceased to receive all ordinances of salvation vicariously.

In that epistle, written one hundred and fifty years ago, Joseph Smith stated: "The Saints have the privilege of being baptized for . . . their relatives who are dead . . . who have received the Gospel in the spirit, through . . . those who have been commissioned to preach to them. . . . Those saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, *do it at the peril of their own salvation*" (*History of the Church*, 4:231, 426; italics added).

The prophet Elijah committed the keys for vicarious work to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:13-16) to fulfill the Lord's promise that "he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2).

Through further revelation to Joseph Smith and subsequent prophets, there has come an understanding of and provision for temple work and the family history effort that supports it. Every prophet since Joseph Smith has emphasized the imperative need to provide all ordinances for ourselves and our deceased ancestors.

This inspired counsel can be simply summarized:

We are to—

- Turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to their fathers.
- Insure that ordinances are performed for ourselves and our ancestors.
- Seal individuals into eternal family relationships.

### **Simplified procedures and regulations**

Many members of the Church recognize the vital importance of these

commandments but feel overwhelmed at the task of identifying their own ancestors. To overcome this feeling, the Church has greatly simplified finding our ancestors and clearing their names for temple work. For example, with the generous cooperation of the original record holders, we have gathered information on approximately two billion of the estimated seven billion individuals for whom records are thought to exist. That resource increases by many millions of names each year.

Also, fifteen hundred family history centers operate worldwide to permit access to our vast record resources. You will find them staffed with sensitive, understanding volunteers who want to help. Through research guides, telefax, and correspondence, these centers are fortified by the impressive capabilities of the Salt Lake City Family History Library.

Modern technology has greatly simplified the prior complex rules and regulations for this work. These streamlined steps are clearly explained in the pamphlet *Come unto Christ through Temple Ordinances and Covenants*. It is available in the principal languages from priesthood leaders throughout the world. This booklet provides a summary of the doctrinal basis for family history and temple service.

Also, where they have been called, ward or branch family history consultants are available to help you succeed.

### **Computer resources**

Many brilliant minds and sensitive hearts have harnessed advanced technology to provide personal computer helps to simplify family history work. Under the descriptive title of **Family Search**,™ these powerful computer-aided resources are now available in family history centers in the United States and Canada. (Request them if they are not there. They are within policy.) In due course, these resources will be made available elsewhere in the world.



**FamilySearch** provides members easy access to the Church's central genealogy computer files. It greatly simplifies research and enables members to more efficiently find information in the Church's vast storehouse of microfilmed records. The computer provides direct, rapid search of a large compilation of valuable information on compact discs without time or error of searching traditional microfilm or microfiche. **FamilySearch** provides these five specific types of helps that are as easy to use as a telephone:

**Ancestral File™** is a computer resource of seven million names linked into family relationships. This resource is the heart of our effort to collect the genealogy of mankind and make that information readily available to others, to simplify their family history research, and permanently preserve family relationships.

**Ancestral File** comprises the "four generation" submittals from members and friends. These data have been carefully matched and coupled one with another, providing a powerfully rich source of family-linked information that simplifies research and reduces duplication. It contains names and addresses, enabling coordination of research with other submitters. Means now exist that permit you or family organizations to enter all of your family-linked information for permanent preservation and use by others.

Recently a friend of the Church, tenderly holding a five-inch-high stack of information, said with obvious gratitude, "The Church placed my life's work in a computer where it will be permanently recorded and available for others to use." That spirit is spreading throughout the world, where friends who wish to show their gratitude for using Church resources are now generously donating their laboriously compiled family history information to share with others.

Another help is the **Family History Library Catalog™**. It contains the

description of virtually every family history record of the Church, permitting a rapid, automatic, precise name or locality search of the detailed catalog descriptions.

The automated **International Genealogical Index™** replaces 10,000 microfiche, providing computer research of data on 147 million deceased individuals and allowing limited linking of family members.

Shortly, an automated 39-million-name **Social Security Death Index** will be distributed.

Within two or three years, other organized data will be readily available on hundreds of millions of deceased individuals. (For data privacy reasons, we do not provide computerized data on living persons.)

For example, a large group of members is organizing the 50-million-name 1880 U.S. Census. Five thousand nonmembers and seventy-seven missionaries are organizing the 27-million-name English 1881 Census. A 5-million-name record of Australian births, marriages, and deaths from 1788 to 1888 is near completion. These helps will permit automatic nationwide search for an ancestor without specifying locality.

Yet another help, the **Personal Ancestral File™**, is a powerful, inexpensive, easy-to-use resource available for home use that helps organize, analyze, and print your family history. It reports what ordinance work is lacking and allows electronic sharing of data.

But for me, the most thrilling resource will eliminate the delay in clearing names for temple work. Beginning next fall, you will be able to clear ancestors' names for temple ordinances in your own meetinghouse yourself, without the need to request headquarters approval. When you verify that no previous ordinance has been performed, you can go immediately to the temple to perform these ordinances.

Yes, the Lord is accelerating His work.

## Loving ancestors through temple work

It was hard to get excited about genealogy work, with its many rules and regulations about commas, periods, and capitalization. The new family history service is quite another matter. It deals with loving, caring, feeling ancestors beyond the veil.

Now, Richard Talbot, John Dunkerson, and Abraham Salee are not just names on a slip of paper for me to receive their temple ordinances. These are ancestors I love through temple work. They, in turn, have influenced my life. I find traits displayed in their purposeful lives woven into the fabric of my own character. Begin this work, and you will know why the Lord said, "The hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2). Learn why this glorious doctrine has been restored to the earth.

Once I listened as a humble sister, blind except for a small window of vision in one eye, bore witness of deeply spiritual experiences she enjoyed with her husband identifying individuals for temple work. She explained that internal bleeding had recently taken the last vestige of sight. Her testimony was sweet, her prayer that she might see enough to serve. Miraculously she was given even greater sight.

One choice source on my ancestors was prepared by a remarkable woman in 1888. She labored without any doctrinal understanding or the abundant resources we have. Following impressions of the heart, her persistence and extensive correspondence produced a 16,000-name lineage-linked treasury of information about our Talbot family. My mother obtained this record. A descendant, Cathy Frost, with two preschool children and expecting another, is computerizing those names. My wife, Jeanene, and I will personally clear them for temple work using the simplified helps I've described today. Our family will go to the temple for these ancestors.

## The Lord will bless your efforts

At present you may find it difficult to go to the temple personally, but you can submit ancestors' names for temple work. You may live where resources are very limited. Begin with ancestors that are closest to you. Search beyond your surname, following all lines of ancestry. Following the simple guidelines, prepare requests for temple work. Resolve to bless the lives of those who are dependent upon you—and in so doing, bless your own life profoundly.

I don't need to tell you the details of where to go and who to see. When you determine you are going to succeed, you will find a way. You will discover those who can help you. I promise you the Lord will bless you in your efforts, for this is His work, and He will guide your prayerful efforts to bring the ordinances and covenants to your ancestors.

I have tasted enough of the fruits of this sublime work to know that the keys Elijah restored to Joseph Smith permit our hearts to be bound and each of us linked to those of our ancestors who are waiting for our help. Through our efforts in holy temples here on earth using the authority delegated by the Savior, our progenitors receive the saving ordinances that allow them to enjoy eternal happiness.

## A monumental effort of cooperation

In the past, motivated by a deep conviction of the sanctity of the work, individuals have valiantly faced a challenge that seemed like singlehandedly endeavoring to harvest all the grain in Nebraska. Now, many mighty combines are at work. *Together we will accomplish the work.*

How fitting that for the 150th anniversary of the declaration by Joseph Smith of vicarious work for the dead, the Brethren have announced greatly simplified means to identify ancestors and permit temple ordinances to be performed for them.

I testify that the spirit of Elijah is touching the hearts of many of Father's children throughout the world, causing the work for the dead to accelerate at an unprecedented pace.

But what about you? Have you prayed about your own ancestors' work? Set aside those things that don't really matter in your life. Decide to do something that will have eternal consequences. Perhaps you have been prompted to look for ancestors but feel that you are not a genealogist. Can you see that you don't have to be anymore? It all begins with love and a sincere desire to help those who can't help themselves.

This is a spiritual work, a monumental effort of cooperation on both sides of the veil where help is given in both directions. It begins with love. Anywhere you are in the world, with prayer, faith, determination, diligence, and some sacrifice, you can make a

powerful contribution. Begin now. I promise you that the Lord will help you find a way. And it will make you feel wonderful.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold" without announcement.

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### President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Eduardo Ayala, who was sustained last April as a member of the Seventy.

## Bishop Glenn L. Pace

### I've told you a thousand times

How many of you parents have had an experience similar to this: You are relaxing for the first time at the end of a long day. Suddenly, the silence and serenity of the moment are shattered by the piercing scream of one of your children. You bolt out of your comfortable chair and meet your child who is running hysterically up the front steps. It is obvious there is a cut that will require stitches. In a fraction of a second you form an opinion of what took place. Consequently, the first words out of your mouth, rather than words of sympathy and comfort, are, "Oh, son, why can't you be more careful? When are you going to learn to mind me? I've told you a thousand times not to play on the garage roof!" Our children will testify that none of us ever claims to have told them two, three, nine, or fifteen times.

We always claim to have told them a thousand times.

### The Lord's warnings

Just as earthly parents have issued warnings, the Lord has warned His children. "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" (D&C 1:4).

And after their testimonies "cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of [the earth]. . . .

"And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, . . . lightnings, . . . tempests, and . . . waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds" (D&C 88:89-90).

"And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars. . . .

"And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound" (D&C 45:26-27).

"And plagues shall go forth" (D&C 84:97).

"And the whole earth shall be in commotion" (D&C 45:26).

It may be an understatement to say the Lord's warnings have begun. How are we responding to the cries for help from God's children? Do we ask, "Why don't you be more careful?" "Why don't you mind the Lord?" "Our Church leaders have told you a thousand times to change your behavior."

### Overcome fatalism

Prior to discussing how we should respond, I would like to suggest, in today's vernacular, two attitude adjustments. First, we need to overcome fatalism. We know the prophecies of the future. We know the final outcome. We know the world collectively will not repent, and, consequently, the last days will be filled with much pain and suffering. Therefore, we could throw up our hands and do nothing but pray for the end to come so the millennial reign could begin. To do so would forfeit our right to participate in the grand event we are all awaiting. We must all become players in the winding-up scene, not spectators. We must do all we can to prevent calamities and then do everything possible to assist and comfort the victims of tragedies that do occur.

Lehi set an excellent example for us in the way he handled his knowledge relative to the future of Laman and Lemuel. Early in their lives, Lehi had a vision that disclosed Laman and Lemuel would not partake of the fruit of the tree of life. Immediately after the vision, however, "he did exhort them . . . with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them" (1 Nephi 8:37). During the remainder of Lehi's life, Laman and Lemuel's actions gave him little hope that they would repent. However, he never gave up but labored with them and loved them even with his dying breath (see 2 Nephi 1:21).

The great prophet Mormon set another example worthy of emulation. He lived at a time that was hopeless. Imagine this: "There were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief" (Mormon 1:14).

In spite of this hopeless situation, Mormon led their armies, for, in his words, "Notwithstanding their wickedness I . . . loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them" (Mormon 3:12).

This prophet had Christlike love for a fallen people. Can we be content with loving less? We must press forward with the pure love of Christ to spread the good news of the gospel. As we do so and fight the war of good against evil, light against darkness, and truth against falsehood, we must not neglect our responsibility of dressing the wounds of those who have fallen in battle. There is no room in the kingdom for fatalism.

### Do not rejoice when the wicked suffer

The second attitude adjustment is to not allow ourselves to find satisfaction in calamities of the last days. Sometimes we tend to take joy in seeing the natural consequences of sin unfold. We might feel some vindication for being ignored by most of the world and persecuted and berated by others. When we see earthquakes, wars, famines, disease, poverty, and heartbreak, we may be tempted to say, "Well, we warned them. We told them a thousand times not to engage in those activities."

We should take these proverbs to heart:

"He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 17:5).

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Proverbs 24:17).

On this subject Job said:

"For I should have denied the God that is above.

"If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him" (Job 31:28-29).

King Benjamin addressed the sin of judging a person in need very clearly:

"Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—

"But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent" (Mosiah 4:17-18).

We know many wounds are self-inflicted and could have been avoided simply by obeying gospel principles. However, to shrug it off as "their problem" is not acceptable to the Lord. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Although He does not condone sin, His arms are always open to the repentant sinner. In modern revelation the Lord has asked us to go one step further: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10).

Our forgiveness must be manifest by reaching out to help mend wounds even when they are the result of transgression. To react in any other way would be akin to setting up a lung cancer clinic for nonsmokers only. Whether the pain has come to someone who is completely innocent or is something of his own making is irrelevant. When a person has been hit by a truck, we don't withhold our help even when it is obvious he didn't stay in the pedestrian lane.

While some of the world's suffering can be traced to an individual's disobedience or lack of judgment, there is wholesale suffering taking place that is not the result of anyone's own mistakes. Millions of people around the world go to sleep hungry. In their waking hours, they are racked with disease and other afflictions. The causes are many, varied, and complex. Also, natural disasters fall on the righteous as well as the wicked.

## Responding to suffering

Now that we have discussed some attitude adjustments concerning fatalism and having any joy in calamities, what action should we take? What should we be doing as a church and as individuals in response to the mammoth need in the world?

Our numbers are few. For every member of the Church in the world, there are approximately a thousand who are not. Our resources are limited, and the needs of the world are vast. We cannot do everything, but we must do everything we can.

The Brethren closely monitor the multitude of crises throughout the world and give assistance to a wide range of countries. The assistance is given where the need seems to be the greatest, without consideration to the political or religious ideologies that exist in each country.

On this subject, Joseph Smith, in response to the question "What is required to constitute good [Church] membership?" said, among other things, "He is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, p. 732).

More recently President Hinckley said, "Where there is stark hunger, regardless of the cause, I will not let political considerations dull my sense of mercy or thwart my responsibility to the sons and daughters of God, wherever they may be or whatever their circumstances" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, p. 72; or *Ensign*, May 1985, p. 54).

As Church members read accounts or see graphic pictures of human suffering, they are touched and ask, "What can we do?" Most of us will not be in a position to help on a person-to-person basis when the need is many miles away. However, every member of the Church can pray for peace throughout the world and for the well-being of all its inhabitants. Also, members may fast

and increase their fast offerings when they are able and thus enable the Church to do more.

### Reach beyond the Church

As far as person-to-person assistance is concerned, the greatest compassionate service each of us can give may be in our own neighborhoods and communities. Wherever we live in the world there is pain and sorrow all around us. We need to take more initiative as individuals in deciding how we can best be of service.

The fact that a particular activity is not sponsored by the Church does not mean it is not worthy of a Church member's support. As individuals, we should become knowledgeable of the opportunities around us. I fear some members suffer from action paralysis, waiting for the Church to put its stamp of approval on one organization or another. The Church teaches principles. Use those principles and the Spirit to decide which organizations you would like to support.

The Lord said, "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will" (D&C 58:27). Good things can be done through the Church organization, community organizations, and very often through no formal organization at all.

We must reach out beyond the walls of our own church. In humanitar-

ian work, as in other areas of the gospel, we cannot become the salt of the earth if we stay in one lump in the cultural halls of our beautiful meetinghouses. We need not wait for a call or an assignment from a Church leader before we become involved in activities that are best carried out on a community or individual basis.

When we get emotionally and spiritually involved in helping a person who is in pain, a compassion enters our heart. It hurts, but the process lifts some of the pain from another. We get from the experience a finite look into the Savior's pain as He performed the infinite atonement. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, a sanctification takes place within our souls and we become more like our Savior. We gain a better understanding of what was meant when He said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

As the last days unfold, we will see all the prophecies fulfilled. We will see today's problems compounded, and we will see new challenges scarcely imaginable at this time. We must reach out to those who are suffering from these events. We must not become fatalistic or judgmental—even if we warn the people in the world of something a thousand times and they heed us not. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Eduardo Ayala

Dear brothers and sisters, throughout my life I have known men and women who keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence and joy and who have, through their examples, edified and blessed the lives of those around them. Some of them now occupy prominent, challenging positions in their personal and professional lives. In the midst of their success, they are not afraid of recognizing that they are

where they are because of the blessings of the Lord.

### A faithful physician

Allow me to share the experience of a faithful member of the Church who occupies a prominent position among the world's microneurosurgeons. This is a position he has obtained, according to his own testimony, with the help of the Lord and through obedience to the Word of Wisdom. He joined the Church

at an early age and promised himself to faithfully live the commandments. As the years went by, he had the opportunity of fulfilling two of his great goals—the opportunity to pursue a university education and to marry the woman of his dreams.

During this period of time something happened that totally changed the course of his life. One of his daughters became seriously ill with a brain disease which ultimately took her life. None of the efforts made in her behalf was sufficient to save her. During this frustrating and painful experience, which happened while he was a medical student at the university, he set a new and challenging goal, that of becoming a neurosurgeon. The fact that his daughter had suffered and died through a brain disease awakened in him the desire to study microneurosurgery, schooling that would be long and difficult.

Microneurosurgery requires, among other things, a great deal of physical discipline and dexterity. At this point in his life, while he was pursuing his studies, he discovered the blessings that come through obedience to the Word of Wisdom. He asked the Lord in humility and love that the promises contained in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants would be made manifest in him so he could bless the lives of those who would depend on his skill.

During those difficult learning years, he worked untiringly to become the best in his area of specialization. As the years went by, he gained great dexterity in his hands and mastered the art and the skill necessary to work on the human brain. As we can imagine, any physical slip or unsteadiness in his hands could cause damage to his patients, perhaps injuring them for life.

### **Blessings of the Word of Wisdom**

As he studied section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, he obtained a strong testimony that when we refrain from taking into our bodies substances that are harmful to it, we are blessed

with intelligence and a healthy and strong body. As a doctor, he knew that these promises were there, within his reach, and he had earnestly sought them in his own behalf.

As the time arrived for his proficiency exam, the final exam in his chosen career, he prepared himself with great care in order to perform to his very best and to demonstrate to the examining doctors the skills he had acquired. The day prior to the examination, he noticed some heavy trembling in his normally skillful hands, and in humility he prayed to the Lord, asking Him to make his hands firm and sure as they had always been to this point. The following day, he discovered with great alarm that there were unsure movements in his hands. He went off to a solitary spot, and, in deep meditation, he mentally searched for any sin he may have committed that would cause him to experience this problem. But in his search, he found nothing that might be contrary to the Word of Wisdom. Then he thought, I need these promises to come to me now, and he prayed to our Father in Heaven with all his heart that His guidance and protection would be with him.

The time came to perform brain surgery on his patient, and when the doctor saw his hands through the microscope, he noted with great emotion that his prayer had been heard and that his hands were steadier than they had ever been.

He felt a great surge of gratitude, and his sure and skillful hands flew in their activity, healing the damaged brain of his patient. The blessings and the promises of the Word of Wisdom were with him, and he was able to carry out this difficult surgery in an hour less than the normal expectation. It was a complete success, and he humbly accepted congratulations from the examining physicians. With gratitude in his heart for the success he had achieved, he returned to his home, and there, with his family, he reviewed the promises of the Lord that “all saints who remember

to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (D&C 89:18-20).

Today as he visits some of the famous clinics and hospitals, and his colleagues have the opportunity of listening to him, he expresses to them and to members of the press, "First, I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and then I am a microneurosurgeon." Not all prominent men achieve the humility to be able to recognize the blessings of the Lord in their lives, which are the result of obedience to the commandments, as this good member of the Church has done.

### **A commandment for today**

Without question, the Word of Wisdom is one of the commandments which we most need to obey in these days, due to the great quantity of stimulants and drugs that have weakened the lives of those individuals who ignore the marvelous promises that the Lord has made to men if they will avoid using these harmful substances.

This commandment is very important today. As an example of the power of the Word of Wisdom, I quote another verse from section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord said, "And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man" (D&C 89:8). The Prophet Joseph Smith received this revelation in February of 1833, and it has been the cause of many controversies. Perhaps in that early period it was only significant to the faithful members of the Church, but now medical doctors have come to recognize that tobacco, in addition to being addictive, also kills those who use it. Used to any degree, tobacco has been

the cause of so much damage among mankind that the need to carry out great campaigns against its use cannot be avoided.

How I wish that each of us could have a strong testimony of the Word of Wisdom and that we could share with others the results of its sacred promises so that our future generations can be healthy and intelligent, and so our families and nations can be strengthened. In this way, we can become worthy of the final promise of the Lord as contained in this section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21). When we humbly recognize and fully accept the counsel of the Lord, nothing will be able to hold back man's intelligence.

The living prophets constantly teach us about these sacred principles, but men seem to mock them even as they are being undermined and destroyed by those harmful substances which not only destroy the body and the mind, but also the spirit. Our clinics and hospitals are full of these people, and yet men still resist the word of the Lord and refuse to recognize the wisdom that lies therein.

I pray for those who can still be saved and for those who have now accepted the counsels of the Lord and have separated themselves from those things that could cause their destruction.

I earnestly desire that we will accept the wisdom of this word of warning, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy have spoken to us. I may say that Brother Ayala has been a true and valiant and tremendous servant of the Lord in South America. I wish I could



speak Spanish as well as he speaks English.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which we shall hear from Elder LeGrand R. Curtis, who was also

sustained in April conference as a member of the Seventy.

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The chorus and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

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## Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

### The ideal home

A month ago we experienced an important event in our lives. Our oldest grandchild was married for time and eternity in the Salt Lake Temple. As that beautiful young lady knelt in the temple with a fine young man, many hopes and blessings were realized—for that young couple, the realization of the tremendous blessings of the temple ordinances; and for their parents, the fulfillment of years of teaching and loving. My wife, Patricia, and I felt many blessings as that group assembled, which included our eight children and their spouses.

Since that day, we have reminisced and reviewed many teachings about what we see as the ideal home and family—which home and family, as to location, size, and makeup, are as diversified as our members. But these factors do not lessen the desire each of us has to achieve that ideal. President David O. McKay said, "It is possible to make home a bit of heaven; indeed, I picture heaven to be a continuation of the ideal home" (*Improvement Era*, Oct. 1948, p. 618). We hope that our children experience some of the following things in our home.

Perhaps the best gift parents can give their children is to love each other, to enjoy each other, and even to hold hands and demonstrate their love by the manner in which they talk to each other.

Home should be a happy place because all work to keep it that way. It is said that happiness is homemade, and we should endeavor to make our homes happy and pleasant places for us and our children. A happy home is one

centered around the teachings of the gospel. This takes constant, careful effort by all concerned.

In the ideal home, each child would be given every possible opportunity to develop his own personality without too much domination. Discipline is organized love, and children develop properly in an atmosphere of love, with adequate guidelines to shape their lives and their habits. More children are punished for mimicking their parents than ever for disobeying them. We should *be* what we want to *see*.

### A house of God

We find in Doctrine and Covenants 88:119 the verse that describes the kind of homes we should strive to create: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."

We know that the world is flooded with books and magazines of negative value for us and for our children. The books in our homes are to be read, and there should be no shelves under lock and key because they hold books of questionable content.

Absolute truth should abide in our homes, and we should sincerely try to answer any question in honesty. Honesty is the companion of truth, and dishonesty of falsehood. We should expect complete honesty from our children as well as from us as parents.

In our homes, we should exhibit hospitality, and friends should feel

welcome. In our home, we preferred that our children search our refrigerator and use our kitchen rather than search the many dark places in the world. Ice cream is better bought early than wished for later.

In the ideal home, Sunday would be the happiest day of the week. We should look forward to its coming because it is the day we go to church together and then come home and discuss together what we learned in our various church meetings. Around the kitchen table at dinnertime would be an excellent opportunity to have parents and children tell about what they learned in their Sunday School classes and other meetings. How we observe the Sabbath indicates our feelings toward our Father in Heaven.

Although Father and Mother work hard, they should find time to keep informed on current events and to read good books, to discuss the *Ensign*, the *New Era*, and the *Friend* with each other and with their children. These magazines can add a wonderful dimension to our lives if we make them part of our homes and discuss them with our families. This is an ongoing challenge for all of us, but it is worth the effort.

The family should kneel together daily in family prayer. Alma 58:10 tells us, "Therefore we did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, yea, and also give us strength that we might retain our cities, and our lands, and our possessions, for the support of our people." Our family has always needed to be strengthened—and still does—and kneeling in prayer daily certainly helps. Children need to be constantly taught how they should act when they mature and have their own families.

Mothers and daughters should be ladies and be modest in all ways. Mothers and daughters should be active in Relief Society, Young Women, or Primary. Sister Curtis and I often reminisce about attending Relief Society at

the side of our mothers when we were children.

Fathers and sons should act gentlemanly and kind. They should honor their priesthood, fill missions, and serve the Lord.

Families need to observe the Word of Wisdom in all ways, never compromising the dos and don'ts of this sacred commandment.

Mothers and fathers and children need the experience of bearing their testimonies and expressing their love for our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ. Testimony bearing is not restricted to the chapel. The family room can be the ideal setting for some very sensitive spiritual experiences. Happy memories are made by appointment, and parents need to plan special spiritual events to create spiritual memories in their homes.

Parents need to care enough to wait up for the children as they return from their dates, or go and find them if they are out too late. I remember reading many pages of scriptures as I sat at the kitchen table waiting for the teenagers to return.

The kitchen table can provide a place for many valuable lessons and warm communications. We should partake not only of good food, but of love and friendship. Scriptures could be read around the kitchen table, and mothers and fathers could explain the teachings of the prophets. Nephi said, "For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children" (2 Nephi 4:15). As we reflect on our years of rearing children, we can see how we and our loved ones have always needed the scriptures. What better could we discuss with our children than the scriptures and our love for them?

Children need to know that their parents love them enough to teach them the gospel. Monday evenings can be made special by family home evening—by the love present and by music, games, and valuable learning moments. We have found that the child who is

rolling on the floor during family home evening listens and learns more than we think possible.

As parents, Sister Curtis and I now watch as our eight children have their own homes. We ponder deeply as we watch them teach their children, who are our grandchildren, about the principles of the gospel. We know it's not easy, but we also know that we all must try.

The things I have talked about today are some of the ideals, some of the things that all of us may work toward. Very few of us have reached that point, but President McKay said it is possible, and knowing that certainly makes the trying worthwhile.

I testify that I know the gospel of Jesus Christ and all that it gives us is meant for our happiness and for the happiness of those we love. Jesus Christ is the center of our lives. I know that he is close to his servants on this

earth this day. He loves each of us, and we can honestly sing and proclaim, "I am a child of God" and mean it (*Hymns*, no. 301).

I testify that Jesus is the Christ. I love him; my wife loves him; and we deeply desire that our children and grandchildren will love and obey our Lord and Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "All Things Bright and Beautiful" without announcement.

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### President Hinckley

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy has spoken to us, following which the chorus sang "All Things Bright and Beautiful."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### The dangers of selfishness

So many times prophets warn about the dangers of selfishness—the inordinate and excessive concern with self. The distance between constant self-pleasing and self-worship is shorter than we think. Stubborn selfishness is actually rebellion against God, because, warned Samuel, "stubbornness is as . . . idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Selfishness is much more than an ordinary problem because it activates all the cardinal sins! It is the detonator in the breaking of the Ten Commandments.

By focusing on oneself, it is naturally easier to bear false witness if it serves one's purpose. It is easier to ignore one's parents instead of honoring them. It is easier to steal, because what one wants prevails. It is easier to covet, since the selfish conclude that nothing should be denied them.

It is easier to commit sexual sins, because to please oneself is the name of

that deadly game in which others are often cruelly used. The Sabbath day is easily neglected, since one day soon becomes just like another. If selfish, it is easier to lie, because the truth is conveniently subordinated.

The selfish individual thus seeks to please not God, but himself. He will even break a covenant in order to fix an appetite.

Selfishness has little time to regard the sufferings of others seriously; hence the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12; D&C 45:27; Moses 6:27).

The last days will be rampant with the cardinal sins, just "as in the days of Noah." Society in the days of Noah, scriptures advise, "was corrupt before God" and "filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11; Moses 8:28). Corruption and violence—sound familiar? Both of these awful conditions crest because of surging individual selfishness. When

thus engulfed, no wonder men's hearts in our day will fail them because of fear (see Luke 21:26; D&C 45:26). Even the faithful can expect a few fibrillations.

Some selfishness exists even in good people. Jane Austen's character Elizabeth mused, "I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle" (*Pride and Prejudice* [New York: Airmont Books, 1962], p. 58). The selfish individual has a passion for the vertical pronoun *I*. Significantly, the vertical pronoun *I* has no knees to bend, while the first letter in the pronoun *we* does.

Selfishness, in its preoccupation with self, withholds from others deserved, needed praise, causing a deprivation instead of giving a commendation.

We see in ourselves other familiar forms of selfishness: accepting or claiming undeserved credit; puffing deserved credit; being glad when others go wrong; resenting the genuine successes of others; preferring public vindication to private reconciliation; and taking "advantage of one because of his words" (2 Nephi 28:8). All things are thus viewed selfishly—what are their implications for "me," much like the mattress on the highway which delayed traffic. When frustrated motorists finally got around the mattress, none stopped to remove it because now there was nothing in it for him.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, "Mankind [is] naturally selfish, ambitious, and striving to excel one above another" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980], p. 201).

Saul, swollen with selfishness, was reminded about an earlier time "when thou wast little in thine own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17).

### Jesus' example of meekness

Selfishness is often expressed in stubbornness of mind. Having a "mind

hardened in pride" often afflicts the brightest who could also be the best (Daniel 5:20). "One thing" the brightest often lack: meekness! Instead of having "a willing mind" which seeks to emulate the "mind of Christ," a "mind hardened in pride" is impervious to counsel and often seeks ascendancy (1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Corinthians 2:16; D&C 64:34). Jesus, who was and is "more intelligent than they all," is also more meek than they all (Abraham 3:19).

Jesus put everything on the altar without fanfare or bargaining. Both before and after His astonishing atonement, He declared, "Glory be to the Father" (D&C 19:19; see also Moses 4:2). Jesus, stunningly brilliant, nevertheless allowed His will to be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7; see also John 6:38). Those with pride-hardened minds are simply unable to do this.

### Put off the natural man

Stubborn selfishness leads otherwise good people to fight over herds, patches of sand, and strippings of milk. All this results from what the Lord calls coveting "the drop," while neglecting "the more weighty matters" (D&C 117:8). Myopic selfishness magnifies a mess of pottage and makes thirty pieces of silver look like a treasure trove. In our intense acquisitiveness, we forget Him who once said, "What is property unto me?" (D&C 117:4).

Such is the scope of putting off the burdensome natural man, who is naturally selfish (see Mosiah 3:19). So much of our fatigue, brothers and sisters, in fact, comes from carrying that needless load. This heaviness of the natural man prevents us from doing our Christian calisthenics; so we end up too swollen with selfishness to pass through the narrow needle's eye.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote of the need to "shed my Martha-like anxiety about many things, . . . shedding pride, . . . shedding hypocrisy in human

relationships. What a rest that will be! The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered," she said, "is being insincere. That is why so much of social life is exhausting" (*Gift from the Sea* [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], p. 32).

Unchecked selfishness thus stubbornly blocks the way for developing all of the divine qualities: love, mercy, patience, long-suffering, kindness, graciousness, goodness, and gentleness. Any tender sprouts from these virtues are sheared off by sharp selfishness. Contrariwise, brothers and sisters, I cannot think of a single gospel covenant the keeping of which does not shear off selfishness from us!

But what a battle for some of us! We are all afflicted in different degrees. The question is, How goes the battle? Is our selfishness being put off—even if only gradually? Or is the natural man like "the man who came to dinner"? Divine tutoring is given largely in order to help us shed our selfishness, "for what son [or daughter] is [there] whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:7).

### Important spiritual perspectives

Restoration scriptures tell us much more about how we can really be forgiven through the atonement of Christ by means of which, finally, "mercy . . . overpowereth justice" (Alma 34:15). We can have real and justified hope for the future—enough hope to develop the faith necessary both to put off the natural man and to strive to become more saintly.

Furthermore, because the centerpiece of the Atonement is already in place, we know that everything else in God's plan will likewise finally succeed. God is surely able to do His own work! (See 2 Nephi 27:20–21.) In His plans for the human family, long ago God made ample provision for all mortal mistakes. His purposes will all triumph and without abrogating man's moral agency. Moreover, all His purposes will come to pass in their time (see D&C 64:32).

However, without these later and other spiritual perspectives, see how differently we behave. Take away an acknowledgment of divine design, and then watch the selfish scurrying to redesign political and economic systems to make life pain-free and pleasure-filled. Misguided governments mean to live, even if they live beyond their means, thereby mortgaging future generations.

Take away regard for the divinity in one's neighbor, and watch the decline in our regard for his property.

Take away basic moral standards, and observe how quickly tolerance changes into permissiveness.

Take away the sacred sense of belonging to a family or community, and observe how quickly citizens cease to care for big cities.

Take away regard for the seventh commandment, and behold the current celebration of sex, the secular religion with its own liturgy of lust and supporting music. Its theology focuses on "self." Its hereafter is "now." Its chief ritual is "sensation"—though, ironically, it finally desensitizes its obsessed adherents, who become "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

Thus, in all its various expressions, selfishness is really self-destruction in slow motion!

Each spasm of selfishness narrows the universe that much more by shutting down our awareness of others and by making us more and more alone. Sensations are then desperately sought precisely in order to verify that one really exists. A variation occurs when one is full of self-pity over affectional deprivation. He ends up in transgression.

Surging selfishness presents us with a sobering scene as the natural man acts out his wants. Many assert their needs—but where have we lodged the corresponding obligations? So many have become demanders, but where are all the providers? There are many more people with things to say than there are listeners. There are more neglected and aging parents than there are attentive sons and daughters—

though, numerically, clearly it should not be so!

### **Come off conqueror**

Just as Jesus warned that some evil spirits would *come out* only with “prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21), the “natural man” does not *come off* without difficulty either.

Of this personal battle, the Lord has urged us to so live that we would “come off conqueror” (D&C 10:5). But we cannot “come off conqueror,” except we first “put off” the selfish, natural man!

The natural man is truly God’s enemy, because the natural man will keep God’s precious children from true and everlasting happiness. Our full happiness requires our becoming the men and women of Christ.

### **Men and women of Christ**

The meek men and women of Christ are quick to praise, but are also able to restrain themselves. They understand that on occasion the biting of the tongue can be as important as the gift of tongues.

The man and woman of Christ are easily entreated, but the selfish person is not. Christ never brushed aside those in need because He had bigger things to do! Furthermore, the men and women of Christ are constant, being the same in private as in public. We cannot keep two sets of books while heaven has but one.

The men and women of Christ magnify their callings without magnifying themselves. Whereas the natural man says “Worship me” and “Give me thine power,” the men and women of Christ seek to exercise power by long-suffering and unfeigned love (see Moses 1:12; 4:3; D&C 121:41).

Whereas the natural man vents his anger, the men and women of Christ are “not easily provoked” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Whereas the natural man is filled with greed, the men and women of Christ “seeketh not [their] own” (1 Cor-

inthians 13:5). Whereas the natural man seldom denies himself worldly pleasures, the men and women of Christ seek to bridle all their passions (see Alma 38:12).

Whereas the natural man covets praise and riches, the men and women of Christ know such things are but the “drop” (D&C 117:8). Human history’s happiest irony will be that the covenant-keeping, unselfish individuals will finally receive “all that [the] Father hath”! (D&C 84:38).

### **We do not own ourselves**

One of the last, subtle strongholds of selfishness is the natural feeling that we “own” ourselves. Of course we are free to choose and are personally accountable. Yes, we have individuality. But those who have chosen to “come unto Christ” soon realize that they do not “own” themselves. Instead, they belong to Him. We are to become consecrated along with our gifts, our appointed days, and our very selves. Hence, there is a stark difference between stubbornly “owning” oneself and submissively belonging to God. Clinging to the old self is not a mark of independence, but of indulgence!

### **Blessings of shedding selfishness**

The Prophet Joseph promised that when selfishness is annihilated, we “may comprehend all things, present, past, and future” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], p. 485). Even now, however, in gospel glimpses we can see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13).

Indeed, the gospel brings glorious illumination as to our possibilities. Scales fall from our eyes with the shedding of selfishness. Then we see our luminous and true identity:

On a clear day, rise and look around you,

And you’ll see who you are.

On a clear day, how it will astound you—

That the glow of your being out-  
shines every star . . .  
And on a clear day . . .  
You can see forever and ever  
more.

[Alan Jay Lerner, "On a Clear  
Day" (Chappell and Co., 1965)]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

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The chorus sang "Come, Ye  
Thankful People" without announce-  
ment.

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### President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the  
Council of the Twelve has just  
addressed us, following which the  
Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Come,  
Ye Thankful People."

President Howard W. Hunter,  
President of the Council of the Twelve  
Apostles, will be our concluding  
speaker for this session.

## President Howard W. Hunter

### Is not this Joseph's son?

In his beloved Galilee, that famil-  
iar, favored home region of Jesus, the  
Son of God performed not only his first  
recorded miracle but went on to per-  
form many great miracles that surely  
must have astonished and awed the  
people of Galilee who saw them. He  
healed a leper, cured the servant of a  
centurion, stilled a tempest, cast out  
devils, healed a paralytic, opened the  
eyes of the blind, and restored a young  
woman to life who had died.

Most of the people of his home  
region would not truly believe. "Is not  
this Joseph's son?" they asked of Jesus,  
refusing to acknowledge his divine heri-  
tage (Luke 4:22). Jesus wept over these  
people who should have known better.  
Because of their skepticism and unbel-  
ief and refusal to repent, he upbraided  
the cities where most of his mighty  
works had been done. In severely criti-  
cizing and finding fault with the wicked  
cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and  
Capernaum, he said:

"For if the mighty works, which  
have been done in thee, had been done  
in Sodom, it would have remained until  
this day.

"But I say unto you, That it shall be  
more tolerable for the land of Sodom in  
the day of judgment, than for thee"  
(Matthew 11:23-24).

### Come unto me

While anguishing over the wicked-  
ness and lack of faith among so many in  
his home area, the Savior voiced his  
prayer of gratitude for the humble and  
plain people who did hear his teachings  
and did believe. These lowly learners  
needed him, and they needed his  
message. They demonstrated that the  
humble, the needy, and the sorrowing  
would hear the word of God and cherish  
it. With reassurance to these new be-  
lievers and concern for those not choos-  
ing to follow him, Christ issued a  
profound invitation in what Elder  
James E. Talmage has appropriately  
called "one of the grandest outpourings  
of spiritual emotion known to man"  
(*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City:  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-  
day Saints, 1916], p. 258). These are the  
words of the Master used in making this  
appeal:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour  
and are heavy laden, and I will give you  
rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn  
of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:  
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my bur-  
den is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

This invitation and promise is one  
of the most oft-quoted of all scripture

and has been of untold comfort and reassurance to millions. Yet there were those among his hearers that day whose vision was so limited that they could see only a carpenter's son speaking of a wooden yoke—a yoke which, from time to time, he had undoubtedly hewn and shaped from heavy wooden timbers for the oxen of these same men who were listening.

Elder Talmage added, "He invited them from drudgery to pleasant service; from the well-nigh unbearable burdens of ecclesiastical exactions and traditional formalism, to the liberty of truly spiritual worship; from slavery to freedom; but they would not" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 259).

Here was a prophetic appeal and magnificent promise to a troubled people facing great peril, but they could not understand it. He knew what lay ahead for them even if they did not, and he was inviting them to come unto him to find rest and safety for their troubled souls. Had he not already shown them that he could give rest to those who labored with profound illness and disease? Had he not already relieved the burden of those who were heavily laden with sin and the cares of the world? Had he not already raised one from the dead, proving that he possessed the divine power to relieve even that greatest of all universal burdens? And yet most would still not "come unto [him]."

### Jesus can ease our burdens

Unfortunately, a refusal to accept his miracles and his glorious invitation is still seen today. This marvelous offer of assistance extended by the Son of God himself was not restricted to the Galileans of his day. This call to shoulder his easy yoke and accept his light burden is not limited to bygone generations. It was and is a universal appeal to all people, to all cities and nations, to every man, woman, and child everywhere.

In our own great times of need we must not leave unrecognized this un-

failing answer to the cares and worries of our world. Here is the promise of personal peace and protection. Here is the power to remit sin in all periods of time. We, too, must believe that Jesus Christ possesses the power to ease our burdens and lighten our loads. We, too, must come unto him and there receive rest from our labors.

Of course, obligations go with such promises. "Take my yoke upon you," he pleads. In biblical times the yoke was a device of great assistance to those who tilled the field. It allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the plow or wagon. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke. His yoke requires a great and earnest effort, but for those who truly are converted, the yoke is easy and the burden becomes light.

Why face life's burdens alone, Christ asks, or why face them with temporal support that will quickly falter? To the heavy laden it is Christ's yoke, it is the power and peace of standing side by side with a God that will provide the support, balance, and strength to meet our challenges and endure our tasks here in the hardpan field of mortality.

Obviously, the personal burdens of life vary from person to person, but every one of us has them. Furthermore, each trial in life is tailored to the individual's capacities and needs as known by a loving Father in Heaven. Of course, some sorrows are brought on by the sins of a world not following the counsel of that Father in Heaven. Whatever the reason, none of us seems to be completely free from life's challenges. To one and all, Christ said, in effect: As long as we all must bear some burden and shoulder some yoke, why not let it be mine? My promise to you is that my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (see Matthew 11:28–30).



### Learning to be like Jesus

"Learn of me," he continued, "for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Surely the lessons of history ought to teach us that pride, haughtiness, self-adulation, conceit, and vanity contain all of the seeds of self-destruction for individuals, cities, or nations. The ashes and rubble of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are the silent witnesses of the Savior's unheeded warnings to that generation. Once majestic and powerful cities, they no longer exist. Would we add our names or the names of our families to such a list? No, of course not; but if we would not, we must be truly meek and lowly. By taking the yoke of Jesus upon us and feeling what he felt for the sins of the world, we learn most deeply of him, and we especially learn how to be like him.

President Ezra Taft Benson has said:

"That man is greatest and most blessed and joyful whose life most closely approaches the pattern of the Christ. This has nothing to do with earthly wealth, power, or prestige. The only true test of greatness, blessedness, joyfulness is how close a life can come to being like the Master, Jesus Christ. He is the right way, the full truth, and the abundant life" ("Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, p. 2).

### An urgent, pleading call

The call to come unto him has continued throughout time and is being renewed in our day. Modern scriptures are replete with the same invitation. It is an urgent, pleading call to everyone. Indeed, the calm but urgent appeal is

still from the Son of God himself. He is, in fact, the Anointed One, who will lift the greatest of burdens from the most heavily laden. The conditions for obtaining that assistance are still precisely the same. We must come unto him and take his yoke upon us. In meekness and lowliness, we must learn of him in order to receive eternal life and exaltation.

May we do so in appreciation for the loving gift of eternal joy he offers us I pray—as I leave with you my personal witness that God our Heavenly Father lives and that Jesus is the Christ, having suffered and given his life that we may have life everlasting—in his holy name, amen.

### President Hinckley

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, who have sung so beautifully for us in this session, will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert E. Sackley of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

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The chorus sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Robert E. Sackley offered the benediction.

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## FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple

Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second

Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions. Julie Hayes Hewlett conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission. We express appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

## **The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers**

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, Jack H. Goaslind, and Gardner H. Russell are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions, under the direction of Sister Julie Hayes Hewlett, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "More Holiness Give Me." Then the invocation will be offered by Elder Adney Y. Komatsu of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

This angelic choir will now sing "My Heart Ever Faithful." President Gordon B. Hinckley will then present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for our sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "My Heart Ever Faithful."

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manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities for the past 5½ years, it is proposed that we release Elders Waldo P. Call and Helio R. Camargo as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in expressing appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

As has been previously announced, these brethren have accepted calls to serve as presidents of the Mexico City and São Paulo Brazil temples respectively.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Monte J. Brough as the Young Men General Presidency and Elder Ted E. Brewerton as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. I wish to note that these releases are made necessary because of other as-

signments. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Jack H. Goaslind, LeGrand R. Curtis, and Robert K. Dellenbach as the Young Men General Presidency and Elder H. Verlan Andersen as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. All in favor, manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. All in favor. Any opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. We thank you, our beloved brothers and sisters, for your continued vote of confidence and love.

**President Thomas S. Monson**

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session. He will be followed by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy.

## Elder Marvin J. Ashton

### A pattern in all things

Over the years I have experienced some uncomfortable times in commercial aircrafts while traveling in turbulent skies. Oftentimes, heavy winds, storms, angry clouds, down drafts, et cetera, have caused bumpy and anxious moments, particularly when it was time to land. A seasoned pilot gave me comfort once after such an experience when he talked about a landing pattern—the ordered flight path of an aircraft about to touch down. Precise instruments, experience, and trust guide the planes to safety en route and through proper landing and takeoff. “We can’t control the weather or elements, but we can stay within the pattern for safety,” he emphasized.

One day I was admiring a beautiful hand-finished quilt made by a skilled

seamstress. As we visited together, I learned that she had made many quilts over the years and was well known for her excellent handiwork. To my query, “Do you ever make one of these quilts without a pattern?” she said, “How would I know how it might turn out if I didn’t have a pattern to follow?”

How can we even guess how our lives will turn out if we don’t choose to follow the right pattern?

What a happy circumstance and strength in our day to have the Lord’s promise, “I will give unto you a *pattern* in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving” (D&C 52:14; italics added). I have always received courage, comfort, and direction from this powerful quotation.

A pattern is a guide for copying, a design, a plan, a diagram or model to be

followed in making things, a composite of traits or features characteristic of an individual. It is also the ordered flight path for an aircraft about to land.

### God's pattern for righteous living

The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's pattern for righteous living and eternal life. It makes possible goal setting and lofty priorities. Satan and his advocates will constantly try to deceive and entice us into following their patterns. If we are to achieve daily safety, exaltation, and eternal happiness, we need to live by the light and truth of our Savior's plan. All salvation revolves around our Savior.

In a recent conversation with a drug addict about priorities, life's patterns, hopes, goals, and purposes, I was grieved when this attractive young lady said, "God is loving. God is kind. Leave me alone, and never mind." The wayward and disobedient will never be happy while smothered with Satan's suggestion that practice makes permanence. God's gift and commitment to agency never will include a tolerance of sin.

God is truly loving and kind. Part of his pattern is to help us use our gift of agency, but his pattern does not condone sin. When we abuse our agency to choose a life-style contrary to revealed patterns, we must live with the consequences. Our unwillingness to follow the true and tested patterns given for our happiness causes the individual, family, and friends heartaches and ultimate disaster. Our freedom to choose our course of conduct does not provide personal freedom from the consequences of our performances. God's love for us is constant and will not diminish, but he cannot rescue us from the painful results that are caused by wrong choices.

### Be not deceived by Satan's patterns

It is no secret that Satan wages open war with the truth and all those

who live righteous lives. He deceives with skill and effectiveness even his own followers. He would have us give up, quit, rebel when setbacks come. Sometimes in life when we are committed to and are following proper patterns, we experience heavy bumps and anxious hours. Many times true winners in life are those who have been hurt and disappointed but have risen above these challenges. Very often in life, God gives us difficulties to bring out the best in us. It is true, life does not determine winners. Winners determine life.

The great Olympic slogan says that the glory of the Olympic Games is not in the victory, but in taking part—taking part like a man. Grantland Rice once wrote, "When the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name, he marks—not that you won or lost—but how you played the game" (in *The Home Book of Quotations*, ed. Burton Stevenson [New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1934], p. 754).

Satan has a way of wrapping enticing diversions with ribbons, bows, and fancy coverings. Inside are immorality, self-destruction, and substandard culture temptations. His established pattern is to deceive at all costs. His calls to "live it up," "enjoy the 'now,'" "go for it," "do your own thing," and yield to peer pressures are some of his available enticements for the susceptible in the days and hours to come. He cunningly uses damaging deceit in its most dastardly form. He would have us forget that the essential thing in life is not conquering, but steadfast commitment to righteous patterns.

Satan is the author of all programs that dress up evil and wrong to whet our appetites. Yielding to his temptations that promote immoral conduct will never bring happiness. When we are down and out and scrambling for relief from his clutches, he will continue to recommend patterns of conduct that allow us to destroy our self-respect.

Why does a loving God permit children he truly loves to be tempted by Satan and his ways? We have the answer from a great prophet-teacher:

"Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:16).

Avoid Satan's territory of deceit. It will never lead to happiness. Evidence to the contrary, there are no successful sinners. All of us must one day stand before God and be judged according to our personal deeds done in the flesh. The burdens of the sinner will never be lighter than that of the saint. Be not deceived by the lures of Satan. God is at the helm and is grieved when we, his children, stray from proven paths of enduring happiness and righteousness. He would have us hold fast to the iron rod with total commitment and strength.

One of Satan's most intriguing traps among many of God's children today seems to be a trend to postpone taking on mature personal responsibilities, such as avoiding marriage because of the possibility of divorce, and becoming involved in the drug culture because life is so uncertain. There are segments of our population that march, protest, and demand handouts and cures rather than follow God's given rules of prevention and self-discipline. Following revealed patterns helps us to recognize our weaknesses, deal positively with them, overcome them, and rise to Christlike heights.

### **God's patterns are great gifts**

We must, if we will have happiness, follow the straight and prescribed paths. "I will give you a pattern in all things" is one of the Lord's greatest gifts and promises. Today it comes from him and his prophets. Keeping one's mind occupied with constructive, useful things on a constant basis prevents Satan from having success in idle minds. Good music, art, literature, recreation, and other worthy pastimes can help es-

tablish proper patterns in one's mind and conduct. Happiness is a by-product of righteous living and sharing within the framework of lofty patterns. Actions of the moment may be fun, but true happiness depends upon how you feel after the involvement is over.

Besides patterns for prayer, we have direction for pondering, procedure, patience, action, and integrity. There are patterns for all worthy things if we will search for them. "And behold, it must be done according to the pattern which I have given unto you" (D&C 94:2). There is no other proven way.

"And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me.

"Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens" (D&C 52:18-19).

In all our phases of life, it is expedient that we have correct patterns to follow.

### **Roger Bannister's four-minute mile**

One of my favorite sports stories has to do with Roger Bannister, who many years ago participated in the Olympic Games as a champion in the one-mile race. He was supposed to win, but he wound up finishing in fourth place. He went home from the Olympics discouraged, disillusioned, and embarrassed.

He had his mind set on giving up running. He was a medical student at the time, and his studies were so demanding. He decided that he'd better get on with life and devote all of his time in preparing for medicine and forget his hopes about running the world's record in the four-minute mile. He went to his coach and told him, "Coach, I'm through. I'm going to devote all my time to studying." His coach said, "Roger, I think you are the man who can break the four-minute mile. I wish you'd give it one last try before you quit."

Roger didn't answer him. He went home knowing not what to say or to do. But before the night was over, he

had convinced himself that he would develop an iron will before he quit running. He was going to break the four-minute mile.

He knew what this meant. He would have to set a pattern and live by it. He realized he would have to study seven, eight, or even nine hours a day to get through medical school. He would have to train for at least four hours a day.

Also involved was running continually to build up his body to the peak of perfection. He knew he would have to eat the best foods. He knew he would have to go to bed early every night and sleep nine or ten hours, to let his body recuperate and constantly build up for the great day. He determined within himself that he was going to follow the rigid pattern he and the coach knew was necessary for victory and achievement.

On May 6, 1954, the four-minute-mile barrier was broken by Roger Bannister—a tall, stooped Englishman with a big-boned, angular face and a ruddy complexion—a man committed to a winning pattern which would bring him recognition worldwide.

On a dreary, cold, wet, and windy day, he went to the Oxford University track to put his theories and skill to the acid test. His parents and a few hundred others were present. The rest is history. Running strictly according to his charts and pattern, he ran the miracle mile in 3:59.4. He became the first man in recorded history to speed across this distance in less than four minutes. He had proven that man could run faster than was thought possible. He paid the price and reaped the rewards of following the proper pattern. Today in England he is a doctor in his own right. At the time of his victory over the one-mile barrier, he became an international hero in all the record books. The four-minute-mile barrier is broken constantly these days, but Roger Bannister set the pattern many years ago and followed it with total commitment, self-discipline, and a will of iron.

## **A pattern for receiving revelation**

Patterns are given by the Lord that we may follow, reason, and endure in righteousness. Within the Church there is an established pattern for receiving revelation and instructions. We need to be reminded that anyone claiming to receive direction or revelation for others should be held suspect. This is especially true when the content is believed to have relevance for areas, regions, stakes, or wards in the Church for whom the person has no particular responsibility. God has in the past and will continue in the future to reveal his will through his prophets.

## **A pattern of conduct**

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, established a pattern of conduct for all mankind. He reminded us, "If ye love me, feed my sheep" (see John 21:17). The love is greater than the who, where, how, or when. It must be unconditional and constant.

To gain exaltation and happy daily life, we must follow a pattern of righteousness. Our self-esteem and success can best be measured by how we follow the patterns of life which prevent deceit, haughtiness, pride, or pessimism.

Solid, permanent progress can take place in the days ahead only if deception is avoided, no matter how advantageous it may seem to yield or compromise basic principles of conduct.

Be not deceived. God is not mocked. He knows what is best for his children and those who love him and would develop the traits and characteristics shown by his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward" (D&C 58:26).

Instead of our being commanded in all things, we are given a pattern in all things. The choice to use these safe

paths is ours. God help us to follow his patterns and reap the rewards he has in store for the obedient, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

## Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

### Gaining a testimony

May I tell you of the hour of my true conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ and his restored gospel. Perhaps my experience will strengthen those who desire a closer relationship with our Father in Heaven and a more profound testimony of the truthfulness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Some years ago while traveling to a mission in Germany, I found myself, in stormy November, aboard a ship sailing from New York to Bremerhaven. The ocean boiled with turmoil. We were all seasick. All we could eat were soda crackers and Zwieback. I was almost afraid I was not going to die!

As the days passed it dawned on me: I'm really going on a mission. Do I truly have a testimony? Am I prepared to bear it "at all times and . . . in all places"? (Mosiah 18:9).

I thought I had a testimony, but now the real trial of my faith was coming. I was going to a foreign land where the only words I could speak in German were *Volkswagen* and *auf Wiedersehen*.

During the voyage I realized my testimony was not a spiritual fire of conviction, particularly of the Book of Mormon. And so I knelt down on the cold steel floor of that rocking ship and begged the Lord with my tears. I prayed, "Dear Father, I have got to know that the Book of Mormon is true. I have read it, I think I understand it, but I desire the fire which helps a man

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach, sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference, will now address us. The choir will then sing "God Is Love." Elder Harold G. Hillam, also sustained as a member of the Seventy last April, will follow the choir.

know that the Book of Mormon is thy word. Please, Father, help me."

Somewhere out on the lonely Atlantic, during those turbulent days, a sweet spirit and peace came to me — "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I received a witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and that supernal event became my hour of conversion.

If you question whether you have a testimony of the restored gospel, I encourage you to read, ponder, and study the Book of Mormon. Why the Book of Mormon? Because this holy scripture is the great testifier and converter. This ancient record is a spiritual compass for us to follow. Joseph Smith said, "The Book of Mormon was . . . the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*History of the Church*, 4:461). When you come to know that this testament of Christ is true, you will know that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration and that Ezra Taft Benson is the Lord's prophet today. The Book of Mormon was written for our day to convince us "that Jesus is the Christ" (Book of Mormon title page). If your soul is searching for a more profound testimony of Jesus Christ and his restored kingdom, I suggest, in conjunction with studying the Book of Mormon, there are four steps you can take which will lead you to your hour of conversion.

These four steps are (1) desire, (2) works, (3) prayer, and (4) trust in the Lord. Let me briefly explain.

## Desire a more firm witness

*First, desire:* Oliver Cowdery desired a more firm witness of the plates which contained the Book of Mormon record. The Lord said to Oliver: "If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?" (D&C 6:22-23). The Lord told Oliver that, first of all, a person needs to have desire.

Alma said, "Even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27).

## Do the works of righteousness

*Second, works:* Oliver Cowdery took a positive action. He moved himself from thinking to doing. In my case, while on board that ship, I had more intimately studied and pondered the Book of Mormon. Young Joseph reflected on the Bible, then went into the woods to pray. Moses climbed Mount Sinai. My Great-grandmother Nelson boarded a ship in Denmark, with a flock of little children, to join the Mormons in Utah. Righteous works yield a divine harvest. The Lord said, "He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

## Pray to know the truth

*Third, prayer:* "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed" (*Hymns*, no. 145).

As we sincerely pray to the Lord and rely upon his divine whisperings, that still, small voice will come to us (see Helaman 5:30). We will receive a peace, knowing that God has answered our prayers. Remember the peace that Oliver received. These spiritual embers can grow into a flame of testimony (see Helaman 5:45).

Alma, upon meeting the four sons of Mosiah, who had been on a fourteen-

year mission, rejoiced at their knowledge of the truth. He said, "They had searched the scriptures diligently, [and] they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; [and] they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:2-3).

"Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ," counseled Moroni, "if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, . . . he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).

Surely the Lord would not ask us to pray if he did not intend to answer our prayers. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

## Trust in the Lord

*Fourth, "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding"* (Proverbs 3:5). We can trust the Lord. He is our truest Friend. He always keeps his word. "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith," admonished Ether (Ether 12:6).

May I ask you to extend your trust in the Lord. Take the Book of Mormon into your hands. As you read it, ask yourself, Could any man write this? Then ask the Lord, Is this thy word?

A word of caution: Satan wants to stop you. He will try to distract, deceive, and weaken your desire, your righteous works, your sincere prayers, and your trust in the Lord. Do not be afraid. We have already overcome the evil one at another time and place. We are told that in the great premortal war, "[we] overcame [Lucifer] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [our] testimony" (Revelation 12:11). We had a valiant testimony in our premortal state, and we can resist Satan and awaken that testimony again today.

The Book of Mormon is our testimonial Liahona (see Alma 37:45). This voice from the dust guides us to know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that his church has been restored.



If you have even a small desire for a greater witness, please do the works of righteousness, trust in the Lord, pray and anxiously explore the Book of Mormon. I testify that it is the word of God. This iron rod marks the path that will guide your soul to your hour of conver-

sion. I rejoice with you in that glorious event. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "God Is Love."

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## Elder Harold G. Hillam

### A shoeshine man in Lisbon

Some years ago, while I was serving as the mission president in Portugal, several of our missionaries introduced me to their shoeshine man. Their shoes looked so good that I was anxious to meet the man that could put such a shine on missionaries' shoes. Even though he had not chosen to listen to the missionaries' message, I considered the shoeshine man my friend, and we visited while he was busy shining my shoes. He indicated that his wife had died, that he had no family, and that about the only pleasure he had in life was seeing people walk away happy with the shoes he had just shined.

His place of business was on the curbside of a small square on a busy street in downtown Lisbon. His stand seemed to have all that was necessary. It consisted of a short, rusty, three-legged stool, upon which my frail friend would sit as he shined the shoes that were placed on a stained and well-used shoeshine box that was full of his polishes and brushes, and there was an ornate lamppost (which was kindly furnished by the city of Lisbon), upon which the customer would lean while he was having his shoes shined.

He would carefully apply two coats of polish, using a brush to polish between each coat. Last, he applied a special product that would give the shoes that extra special shine. With a final snap of the cloth, he would stand up, take off his little Portuguese cap, make a deep bow, and say, "*Pronto. Seus sapatos foram engrachados pelo o melhor engraxate do mundo.*" "There. Your

shoes were shined by the very best shoeshine man in the world." I was convinced that I had had my shoes shined by the very best.

A few months after our mission, I was called to serve as the Regional Representative to Portugal and had the opportunity to return to Lisbon a number of times. As occasion permitted, I would have my shoes shined by the "best shoeshine man in the world."

The last few times that I went, I was unable to find him at his usual place of business. I finally inquired at the prestigious stores that surrounded the square. The response was the same, "We don't know what happened to him. It seems that we had heard that he had died." I remember thinking, Could it be that the best shoeshine man in the world had died, and no one really knew or even seemed to care? I wondered: Had there been someone there with him, or did he slip away unnoticed?

### Brother and Sister Joaquim Aires

May we contrast that for a moment with Brother and Sister Joaquim Aires, a marvelous man and his wife who came to Portugal following the 1974 revolution of Portugal's colonies in Angola and Mozambique. They had returned to Portugal unknown and with very few possessions. A great blessing occurred in their lives. They opened their door to two young missionaries, who taught them of the restoration of Christ's church. They received the missionaries, accepted their message, and were baptized.

As is the opportunity for all worthy men in the Church, he received the priesthood—authority to act in the name of our Father in Heaven—and to become a leader in the Church. Brother Aires became President Aires, president of one of the mission districts.

One day I received a telephone call. President Aires was in the hospital in Coimbra, several hours' travel away. He had suffered a very serious cerebral hemorrhage and was in very critical condition. Another priesthood holder and I made the trip as quickly as possible. As we walked quietly into the hospital room, we found him asleep. My first inclination was not to awaken him. And then I thought he would want to know that we had come. So I reached over and carefully touched his hand. He slowly opened his eyes and then looked at me for a moment, and then the tears came to both of our eyes. He then said in a very weak and soft voice, "I knew you would come. I knew you would come. Would you please give me a blessing." In his dear, sweet faith, he was asking for a priesthood blessing, the same that is taught of and recorded in the Bible. We read in James 5:14-15:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

As men of the priesthood, it was our privilege to pronounce a blessing on him with power and authority of our Father in Heaven.

As I would meet with the members of the Church from one end of Portugal to the other, the brothers and sisters would ask, "How is Brother Aires? Will you please tell him we love him and we're praying for him?"

This good man and his wife, who had returned to Portugal almost unknown, now, because of their membership in the Church, had literally thousands who loved them and were

concerned about them and remembered him in their prayers.

The prayers of faith were answered. He recovered completely, and he and Sister Aires went on to fulfill a full-time mission together.

I have thought often of the contrast between the two—my little shoeshine man on one hand, who, like so many of life's unknown wanderers, had slipped away without any understanding of life's purpose; and Brother Aires on the other, who was not only taught of life's real purpose, but had now become a part of a great body of people who showed their love and appreciation for him.

### **No more strangers and foreigners**

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the members of the Church, or Saints as they were called and are called today, he reminded the newly baptized members of the Church of the blessings of belonging when he told them, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). What a blessing it is to belong and to be wanted and needed! It becomes even more apparent during life's tender moments.

To all who find yourselves outside the household of faith and away from the Saints, would you please accept this invitation to come unto Christ that we might all, as Alma said, "bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8). Join with the Saints, that you might not be any longer strangers alone in this world, but truly cared for, loved, and appreciated.

And to all of us—those of us who are members of the Church, could I just counsel with you for a moment? Do you have anyone that you know who might be as our little shoeshine man, who is alone—alone in this great crowd of people—that could use your special love and caring and concern? Could you take a moment and let such people know how much you love them?

And may we also, as members of the Church, truly do our part to make His church a welcome refuge for all of our Father in Heaven's children, I pray humbly in the name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **President Monson**

We have just listened to Elders Robert K. Dellenbach and Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice." Elders Helvécio Martins and Lynn A. Mickelsen, who were also sustained as members of the Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

## **Elder Helvécio Martins**

### **Testimonies influenced conversion**

Brothers and sisters, it all began one beautiful night during April of 1972 when Elders Thomas McIntire and Steve Richards knocked on my door. At that time, I was searching for answers to many questions that confused and troubled my spirit. The principles taught that night contained the answers my wife and I had searched for so anxiously.

Our hearts rejoiced upon hearing the message of the restored gospel. But one special thing deeply affected our souls: the power of the testimonies of two representatives of the Lord. A marvelous feeling that we never before had experienced filled our hearts, certifying the truthfulness of the message. Our first visit to church was an edifying experience because of the Spirit there and the love those people showed us. The spirit of the messages and testimonies was confirmatory evidence that we had found the true church. The support of the missionaries, the successful fellowshipping efforts by the members, and our combined prayers and fasting gradually changed our worldly habits.

With respect and reverence, we attended the meetings and activities, but we postponed baptism because of the fear of negative reactions from our extended families.

The events following showed us our complete lack of wisdom, and of this we repented. The district of Rio de

Janeiro met in the Tijuca chapel for its quarterly conference. A strong spirit filled the hall from the first chords of the organ prelude.

The inspired messages from the pulpit prepared our hearts for an unforgettable moment. President George A. Oakes of the Brazil North Mission, who presided at the conference, introduced Brother Val Carter, his mission counselor.

After quoting selected scriptures, President Carter invited the men to stand and sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." After sharing his testimony of the mission of our Lord, Jesus Christ, President Carter declared his complete dependence on Christ for salvation and exaltation.

That experience deeply touched my heart and all my being. It was not possible to control my emotions. I could not imagine myself in tears, but the tears were indeed real. In that moment, the Holy Ghost reconfirmed the truthfulness of the things we already knew: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the Lord's kingdom on earth, the road back to the celestial mansion of our Eternal Father.

A miracle occurred in that moment, and our fears about baptism vanished. On July 2, 1972, my wife and I and our eldest son, Marcus, entered the fold through the gates of baptism.

Through our obedience to the laws of the gospel, fasting, and service, our

Heavenly Father blessed us with power to overcome fear, challenges, and eventual adversities.

### The value of a testimony

From our extended families, only one of my sisters, Ivette, has accepted the restored gospel and been baptized. Nevertheless, the remainder of the family highly respects the Church. The same miracle happened in our social and professional circles—prejudice and misunderstanding eventually subsided, and some of our best friends have accepted baptism.

To what must we attribute such miracles? To the strength and power of the testimonies of faithful Saints upon which I was temporarily dependent. This influence aroused me intellectually and spiritually, preparing my mind and heart to receive in fulness a personal confirmation of the Holy Ghost.

But a testimony is not a work that is merely completed and concluded. Indeed, it is a process in continuous development. Nourishing and strengthening our testimonies is essential to our spiritual survival.

John Taylor, still a newly called elder of the Church, arrived in Kirtland while the fierce winds of apostasy were raging. Parley P. Pratt reported to him the rumors murmured against Joseph Smith. John Taylor answered:

"The principles you taught me led to [the Lord], and I now have the same testimony that you then rejoiced in. If the work was true six months ago, it is true today; if Joseph Smith was then a prophet, he is now a prophet" (in B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963], pp. 39–40).

In the same way, Ammon and his brothers "had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all; they had given them-

selves to much prayer, and fasting" (Alma 17:2–3).

A testimony should not be hidden. It must be shared (see D&C 62:3; 84:61).

In a remarkable address during the April session of general conference in 1973, President Harold B. Lee said,

"For the strength of the Church is not in the numbers, nor in the amount of tithes and offerings paid by faithful members, nor in the magnitude of chapels and temple buildings, but because in the hearts of faithful members of the Church is the conviction that this is indeed the church and kingdom of God on the earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 9; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 6).

### Gain and strengthen testimonies

Brothers and sisters, I am absolutely sure that you can imagine how long my journey was to arrive here. But I ask if you know what brings me here? And I hasten to answer: my testimony.

It is a special gift of our Heavenly Father given through the Holy Ghost to all people who search for truth (see Moroni 10:4–5). It is wise to gain and improve a testimony of the truth because it not only helps us face our daily challenges, but it also opens our eyes, minds, and hearts to the great and marvelous things created by our Heavenly Father for our improvement and eternal happiness.

I know that God lives. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, also lives, and we are dependent on Him for our salvation and exaltation.

Joseph Smith was indeed the key prophet of the Restoration in this dispensation. The Lord speaks today through our living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, whom we love and follow. The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel.

This testimony I witness unto you with all my heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen

What is truth? This poignant question was asked by the Roman ruler Pilate as the accused Savior was brought before him declaring: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). In modern-day revelation, He declared:

"Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

"And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:24-25).

### Receiving truth by the Spirit

How can we know the truth? The early members of the Church brought with them many customs, traditions, and practices from their earlier beliefs. Not all of these practices conformed to the will of the Lord. In a revelation given in May 1831, He explained to the elders of the Church how to discern and decide which of these practices were appropriate. He referred to both sides of the issue of teaching and receiving. Not only must we teach by the Spirit, we must receive by the Spirit.

"And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"If it be some other way it is not of God" (D&C 50:19-20).

If we do not receive the truth by His spirit, it is not His word. In a latter-day revelation the Lord speaks very strongly about those who get on the wrong side of the question:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that Satan has great hold upon their hearts; he stirreth them up to iniquity against that which is good;

"... And they love darkness rather than light . . . ; therefore they will not ask of me" (D&C 10:20-21).

### Asking, seeking, and knocking

A few months ago, a friend came to our home under the pretext that he had

some questions about the Church he needed help in answering. He said he had discovered the Book of Mormon was not the word of God and that Joseph Smith was not a prophet of God. He then proceeded to quote articles and books which were written by enemies of the Church. As he listed his sources, I replied that I also had read them and others, and they had only served to confirm my faith in the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was surprised that I could have read the same things he had read and not believe as he believed. I suggested that he devote at least equal time to the right side of the issue, but he had come with a decision, not a question. His mind was made up. He did not want to know. His heart was closed. I thought of the children of Israel and their reaction to the Lord after He had guided them out of bondage: "And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God" (1 Nephi 17:30).

The promise of the Lord with regard to His word and His works is very explicit: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17). This was His constant rejoinder to those who rejected Him.

He told the Pharisees and the Sadducees they were looking in the right places with the wrong objectives in mind when He said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). They had obviously made a very careful study of the word that testified of Him and failed to find Him. Their foregone conclusions had not allowed the Spirit to guide them.

The same conditions exist today: we must ask the right questions; we must seek in the right places and knock on the right doors. That sometimes is very difficult to do. Nicodemus had to come to the Savior by night because his position in the community and in his church would have been seriously threatened had his contemporaries known of his inquiry in the right place (see John 3:1–21).

King Lamoni asked the right questions of Ammon when he said, “Who are you? How do you know these things? Where is God? Are you sent from him?” Then Ammon explained the plan of salvation to him, and he was able to understand because he opened his mind to knowledge and his heart to the Spirit (see Alma 18:18–40).

The prophet Alma, in his great discourse to the Zoramites, said, “But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27). He explained to them that we open the door to receive by the Spirit with just a desire to believe. We must want to know the truth; we manifest that desire by asking, seeking, and knocking; the explicit promise is that He will answer, open, and help us find the truth.

### Preparing hearts to know truth

We must prepare our hearts and our minds with a sincere desire to know the truth. King Benjamin taught, “My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have *not* commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be un-

folded to your view” (Mosiah 2:9; italics added).

On the day of Pentecost, when Peter and John obviously were speaking with great power and by the Spirit, the men were pricked in their hearts and asked the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). In order to receive the truth, we must do the same. That is our responsibility—to ask and to seek.

### Mormon’s counsel for judging truth

As we seek for the truth, we should always bear in mind the counsel of Mormon when he explained, “Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil” (Moroni 7:12). He then counseled us to be very careful in choosing and gave us the way to decide:

“For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:15–16).

### Witnesses of the Savior

What a blessing it is for us that the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the right questions in the right places for the right reason. As he and Sidney Rigdon pondered the question of the state of man’s existence after this life, the Lord touched the eyes of their understanding, and they were opened to a vision of the kingdom of God. In recording this vision they said:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22–24).

Yes, for me it is as clear as the night from the day. Their witness of the Savior is true. I have heard His voice as I have read His word in the sacred writings of the prophets of the Book of Mormon and rejoiced with the further light and knowledge granted to our latter-day prophets. I add my witness to theirs:

He lives; I know He lives. This is His church. May we all look in the right places and ask the right questions and thus be taught by His Spirit to know the truth, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

We have just heard the remarks of Helvécio Martins and Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

A few months ago, I received a letter from a Church member who posed an unusual question: "Do I have a right to bear testimony of the Savior? Or is that the sole prerogative of the Twelve?" In response, I will share some thoughts on why every member of this church should bear witness and testimony of Jesus Christ.

### **First parents established a pattern**

In the beginning, God commanded Adam, "Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore" (Moses 5:8). Then the Holy Ghost, "which beareth record of the Father and the Son," came upon Adam and Eve, and they "blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters" (Moses 5:9, 12).

Later, Enoch described how God had taught Adam that all must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, whose atoning sacrifice made possible the forgiveness of sins, and that they must teach these things to their children (see Moses 6:52–59).

And so our first parents established the pattern, receiving a testimony

from the Holy Ghost and then bearing witness of the Father and the Son to those around them.

### **Ways to witness of Christ**

The prophet Nephi described the ordinance of baptism as an occasion when persons would witness unto the Father that they were willing to take upon them the name of Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:13). Similarly, the Lord has specified that those who desire to be baptized in this dispensation should "come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they . . . are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ" (D&C 20:37; see also Moroni 6:3). We renew that promise when we partake of the sacrament (see D&C 20:77; Moroni 4:3).

We also witness of Christ by our membership in the Church that bears his name (see 3 Nephi 27:7; D&C 115:4).

We are commanded to pray unto the Father in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 18:19, 21, 23; see also Moses 5:8), and to do "all things . . . in the name of Christ" (D&C 46:31).

If we follow these commandments, we serve as witnesses of Jesus Christ through our baptism, our membership in his church, our partaking of the sacrament, and our prayers and other actions in his name.

### **Some of us fall short as witnesses**

But our duty to be witnesses of Jesus Christ requires more than this, and I fear that some of us fall short. Latter-day Saints can become so preoccupied with our own agendas that we can forget to witness and testify of Christ.

I quote from a recent letter I received from a member in the United States. He described what he heard in his fast and testimony meeting:

"I sat and listened to seventeen testimonies and never heard Jesus mentioned or referred to in any way. I thought I might be in [some other denomination], but I supposed not because there were no references to God, either. . . .

"The following Sunday, I again attended church. I sat through a priesthood lesson, a Gospel Doctrine lesson, and seven sacrament meeting speakers and never once heard the name of Jesus or any reference to him."

Perhaps that description is exaggerated. Surely, it is exceptional. I quote it because it provides a vivid reminder for all of us.

### **Stand as witnesses of God**

In answer to the question, "What are the fundamental principles of your religion?" the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 121).

When Alma spoke to a group of prospective members at the Waters of Mormon, he instructed them on the duties of those who were "desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people" (Mosiah 18:8). One of those duties was "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

### **How to become witnesses**

How do members become witnesses? The original Apostles were eyewitnesses to the ministry and resurrection of the Savior (see Acts 10:39–41). He told them, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8; see also 10:42–43). However, he cautioned them that their witnessing would be after they had received the Holy Ghost (see Acts 1:8; see also Luke 24:49).

An eyewitness was not enough. Even the witness and testimony of the original Apostles had to be rooted in the testimony of the Holy Ghost. A prophet has told us that the witness of the Holy Ghost makes an impression on our soul that is more significant than "a visitation of an angel" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 1:44). And the Bible shows that when we testify on the basis of this witness, the Holy Ghost testifies to those who hear our words (see Acts 2; 10:44–47).

### **Every member should bear witness**

When Peter and the other Apostles were brought before the civil authorities, he testified that Jesus Christ was "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Then Peter added, "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them



that obey him" (5:32). The mission of the Holy Ghost is to witness of the Father and the Son (see 2 Nephi 31:18; 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 20:27). Consequently, everyone who has received the witness of the Holy Ghost has a duty to share that testimony with others.

Apostles have the calling and ordination to be special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23), but the duty to witness and testify of Christ at all times and in all places applies to every member of the Church who has received the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

The book of Luke records two examples of this. In obedience to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem after forty days, to present him to the Lord. There, two aged and spiritual temple workers received a witness of his identity and testified of him. Simeon, who had known by revelation from the Holy Ghost that he should not taste of death until he had seen the Messiah, took the infant in his arms and testified to his divine mission (see Luke 2:25-35). Anna, whom the scripture called "a prophetess" (Luke 2:36), recognized the Messiah "and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

Anna and Simeon were eyewitnesses to the infant, but, just like the Apostles, their knowledge of his divine mission came through the witness of the Holy Ghost. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). Therefore, we can properly say that when each received this witness, Simeon was a prophet and Anna was a prophetess. Each then fulfilled the prophetic duty to testify to those around them. As Peter said, "To [Christ] give all the prophets witness" (Acts 10:43). This was what Moses meant when he expressed the wish "that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29).

The scriptures describe other occasions when ordinary members—men

and women—bore witness of Christ. The Book of Mormon tells of King Lamoni and his queen, who testified of their Redeemer (see Alma 19). The Bible describes the witness of the Holy Ghost coming upon the kinsmen and friends of Cornelius, who were then heard to "magnify God" (Acts 10:24, 46).

Our scriptural duty to witness of the Savior and to testify of his divine Sonship has been affirmed by the prophets in our own day.

We are told that the commandments are given and the gospel is proclaimed that every person "might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20).

### **Gifts of knowing and believing**

Spiritual gifts come by the power of the Holy Ghost, that all the faithful may be benefited. One of these gifts is "to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world" (D&C 46:13). Those who receive that gift have the duty to testify of it. We know this because immediately after describing the gift of knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord says, "To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful" (D&C 46:14; see also 3 Nephi 19:28). Those who have the gift to know must give their witness so that those who have the gift to believe on their words can enjoy the benefit of that gift.

### **Valiant in the testimony of Jesus**

Speaking to some of the earliest missionaries of this dispensation, the Lord said: "But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them" (D&C 60:2).

In contrast, the Lord gave this great promise to those who were valiant in bearing testimony: "For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast . . . in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you" (D&C 84:61).

This caution and promise were directed specifically to missionaries, but other scriptures suggest that they apply to other members as well.

In his vision of the spirits of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith described "the spirits of the just" as those "who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality" (D&C 138:12).

In contrast, in his vision of the three degrees of glory, the Prophet Joseph Smith described those souls who go to the terrestrial kingdom as the "honorable men of the earth," who were "not valiant in the testimony of Jesus" (D&C 76:75, 79).

What does it mean to be "valiant in the testimony of Jesus"? Surely this includes keeping his commandments and serving him. But wouldn't it also include bearing witness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, to believers and nonbelievers alike? As the Apostle Peter taught the Saints of his day, we should "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15).

All of us need to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus. As believers in Christ, we affirm the truth of Peter's testimony in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; see also D&C 109:4). We know from modern revelation that we can come unto the Father only in his name (see D&C 93:19). As the Book of Mormon teaches, salvation is "in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:18; see also Moses 6:52, 59).

## The need for us to profess our faith

To those who are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, I say there has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith, privately and publicly.

When the gospel was first restored, the pulpits of this land were aflame with the testimony of Jesus, the divine Son of God and Savior of the world. True, the fulness of his doctrine and the power of his priesthood had been lost from the earth, but there were many good and honorable men and women who were valiant in their own testimonies of Jesus. Our earliest missionaries concentrated their message on the Restoration—the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the restoring of priesthood authority—since they could assume that most of those they taught had a fundamental belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Today, our missionaries cannot make that assumption. There are still many God-fearing people who testify to the divinity of Jesus Christ. But there are many more—even in the formal ranks of Christianity—who doubt his existence or deny his divinity. As I see the deterioration in religious faith that has happened in my own lifetime, I am convinced that we who are members of his church need to be increasingly valiant in our testimony of Jesus.

Speaking almost twenty years ago, President Harold B. Lee said: "Fifty years ago or more, when I was a missionary, our greatest responsibility was to defend the great truth that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely called and inspired and that the Book of Mormon was indeed the word of God. But even at that time there were the unmistakable evidences that there was coming into the religious world actually a question about the Bible and about the divine calling of the Master, himself. Now, fifty years later, our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not will-

ing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God" (address delivered at LDS Student Association Fireside, Utah State University, 10 Oct. 1971).

Our knowledge of the literal divinity, resurrection, and atonement of Jesus Christ is more certain and more distinctive with each passing year. That is one reason the Lord inspired his prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, to have us reemphasize our study and testimony of the Book of Mormon, whose mission is "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God" (Book of Mormon title page).

### Guard against careless omissions

We live in a time when too many who purport to be Christians have a cause that comes ahead of Christ. For example, a national magazine recently reported an innovation by a new bishop of a prominent Christian church. Their ministers have always consecrated the emblems of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the name of the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." However, in an effort to use what are called "nonsexist words," this new bishop has begun to consecrate the eucharist in the name of the "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer" ("Fretful Murmur in the Cathedral," *Insight*, 24 Apr. 1989, p. 47). Such trendy and expedient tampering with the Christian faith is illustrative of the extent to which some are unwilling to witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Such deliberate deviations are not likely to be made by faithful Latter-day

Saints. However, we need to be on guard against careless omissions and oversights in our personal testimonies, in our formal instruction, and in our worship and funeral services.

### Be not ashamed

In addition, each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our belief to friends and neighbors, fellow workers, and casual acquaintances. I hope we will take these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of his divine mission, and our determination to serve him.

If we do all of this, we can say, like the Apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

And, we can say, like the prophet Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

I testify of Jesus Christ, the Lord God of Israel, the light and life of the world, as I affirm the truth of his gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

## Elder James E. Faust

### Being a parent is a divine calling

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I ask for your faith and prayers this afternoon as I feel moved upon to discuss a subject which I have chosen to call the greatest challenge in

the world. It has to do with the privilege and responsibility of being good parents. On this subject there are about as many opinions as there are parents, yet there are few who claim to have all of the answers. I am certainly not one of them.

I feel that there are more outstanding young men and women among our people at present than at any other moment in my lifetime. This presupposes that most of these fine young people have come from good homes and have committed, caring parents. Even so, the most conscientious parents feel that they may have made some mistakes. One time, when I did a thoughtless thing, I remember my own mother exclaiming, "Where did I fail?"

The Lord has directed, "Bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). To me, there is no more important human effort.

Being a father or a mother is not only a great challenge, it is a divine calling. It is an effort requiring consecration. President David O. McKay stated that being parents is "the greatest trust that has been given to human beings" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children* [pamphlet, n.d.], p. 1).

### Creating successful homes

While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4). In my opinion, the teaching, rearing, and training of children requires more intelligence, intuitive understanding, humility, strength, wisdom, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work than any other challenge we might have in life. This is especially so when moral foundations of honor and decency are eroding around us. To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in

teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics.

As societies as a whole have decayed and lost their moral identity and so many homes are broken, the best hope is to turn greater attention and effort to the teaching of the next generation—our children. In order to do this, we must first reinforce the primary teachers of children. Chief among these are the parents and other family members, and the best environment should be in the home. Somehow, some way, we must try harder to make our homes stronger so that they will stand as sanctuaries against the unwholesome, pervasive moral dry rot around us. Harmony, happiness, peace, and love in the home can help give children the required inner strength to cope with life's challenges. Barbara Bush, wife of President George Bush, a few months ago said to the graduates of Wellesley College:

"But whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children, they must come first. You must read to your children and you must hug your children and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House but on what happens inside your house" (*Washington Post*, 2 June 1990, p. 2).

To be a good father and mother requires that the parents defer many of their own needs and desires in favor of the needs of their children. As a consequence of this sacrifice, conscientious parents develop a nobility of character and learn to put into practice the selfless truths taught by the Savior Himself.

I have the greatest respect for single parents who struggle and sacrifice, trying against almost superhuman odds to hold the family together. They should be honored and helped in their heroic efforts. But any mother's or father's task is much easier where there

are two functioning parents in the home. Children often challenge and tax the strength and wisdom of both parents.

### **How often do you have family prayer?**

A few years ago, Bishop Stanley Smoot was interviewed by President Spencer W. Kimball. President Kimball asked, "How often do you have family prayer?"

Bishop Smoot answered, "We try to have family prayer twice a day, but we average about once."

President Kimball answered, "In the past, having family prayer once a day may have been all right. But in the future it will not be enough if we are going to save our families."

I wonder if having casual and infrequent family home evening will be enough in the future to fortify our children with sufficient moral strength. In the future, infrequent family scripture study may be inadequate to arm our children with the virtue necessary to withstand the moral decay of the environment in which they will live. Where in the world will the children learn chastity, integrity, honesty, and basic human decency if not at home? These values will, of course, be reinforced at church, but parental teaching is more constant.

### **Parents must set the example**

When parents try to teach their children to avoid danger, it is no answer for parents to say to their children, "We are experienced and wise in the ways of the world, and we can get closer to the edge of the cliff than you. Parental hypocrisy can make children cynical and unbelieving of what they are taught in the home. For instance, when parents attend movies they forbid their children to see, parental credibility is diminished. If children are expected to be honest, parents must be honest. If children are expected to be virtuous, parents must be virtuous. If you expect your

children to be honorable, you must be honorable.

Among the other values children should be taught are respect for others, beginning with the child's own parents and family; respect for the symbols of faith and patriotic beliefs of others; respect for law and order; respect for the property of others; respect for authority. Paul reminds us that children should "learn first to shew piety at home" (1 Timothy 5:4).

### **Disciplining children**

One of the most difficult parental challenges is to appropriately discipline children. Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what is too lenient except the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. Brigham Young counseled, "If you are ever called upon to chasten a person, never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:124–25). Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society.

A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: "Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the home

has not already fulfilled its obligation" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, p. 3).

### Teaching children to work

An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, "I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours" (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, "act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon"? (2 Nephi 2:26).

Luther Burbank, one of the world's greatest horticulturists, said, "If we had paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children, we would now be living in a jungle of weeds" (in *Elbert Hubbard's Scrap Book* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1923], p. 227).

### Special challenges for parents

Children are also beneficiaries of moral agency by which we are all afforded the opportunity to progress, grow, and develop. That agency also permits children to pursue the alternate choice of selfishness, wastefulness, self-indulgence, and self-destruction. Children often express this agency when very young.

Let parents who have been conscientious, loving, and concerned and who

have lived the principles of righteousness as best they could be comforted in knowing that they are good parents despite the actions of some of their children. The children themselves have a responsibility to listen, obey, and, having been taught, to learn. Parents cannot always answer for all their children's misconduct because they cannot ensure the children's good behavior. Some few children could tax even Solomon's wisdom and Job's patience.

There is often a special challenge for those parents who are affluent or overly indulgent. In a sense, some children in those circumstances hold their parents hostage by withholding their support of parental rules unless the parents acquiesce to the children's demands. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, "Those who do too much *for* their children will soon find they can do nothing *with* their children. So many children have been so much *done for* they are almost *done in*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 150; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 101). It seems to be human nature that we do not fully appreciate material things we have not ourselves earned.

There is a certain irony in the fact that some parents are so anxious for their children to be accepted by and be popular with their peers; yet these same parents fear that their children may be doing the things their peers are doing.

### Helping children internalize values

Generally, those children who make the decision and have the resolve to abstain from drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex are those who have adopted and internalized the strong values of their homes as lived by their parents. In times of difficult decisions they are most likely to follow the teachings of their parents rather than the example of their peers or the sophistries of the media which glamorize alcohol consumption, illicit sex, infidelity, dishonesty, and other vices. They are like Helaman's two thousand young men who "had been taught by their mothers, that if

they did not doubt, God would deliver them" from death (Alma 56:47). "And they rehearsed . . . the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it" (56:48).

What seems to help cement parental teachings and values in place in children's lives is a firm belief in Deity. When this belief becomes part of their very souls, they have inner strength. So, of all that is important to be taught, what should parents teach? The scriptures tell us that parents are to teach their children "faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost," and "the doctrine of repentance" (D&C 68:25). These truths must be taught in the home. They cannot be taught in the public schools, nor will they be fostered by the government or by society. Of course, Church programs can help, but the most effective teaching takes place in the home.

### **A thousand threads of love**

Parental teaching moments need not be big or dramatic or powerful. We learn this from the Master Teacher. Charles Henry Parkhurst said:

"The completed beauty of Christ's life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; . . . showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart that kept him out of the kingdom of Heaven; . . . teaching a little knot of followers how to pray; . . . kindling a fire and broiling fish that his disciples might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired, and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of [Christ's] interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute" ("Kindness and Love," in *Leaves of Gold* [Honesdale, Pa.: Coslet Publishing Co., 1938], p. 177).

And so it is with being parents. The little things are the big things sewn into

the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work.

### **Children of the covenant**

There are some great spiritual promises which may help faithful parents in this church. Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant (see Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, pp. 110–11).

God bless the struggling, sacrificing, honorable parents of this world. May He especially honor the covenants kept by faithful parents among our people and watch over these children of the covenant. I pray that this may be so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder James E. Faust has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to this Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon and for their own personal beauty and innocence before the Lord. The choir will now sing in closing "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy. As we think of our beloved President and prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, watching the services from his hospital room, I think all of us

will recognize that the words of this song pertain to him.

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The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder John K. Carmack offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 6, 1990. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. The choir was directed by Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood meeting. The Tabernacle on Temple Square is filled to capacity. I am satisfied that if we had a hall that would seat fifty or sixty thousand, we could fill it with these priesthood meetings. Thank you for coming and participating in this great service.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who is unable to be present at the conference proceedings due to recent surgery, has asked that we go forward. We do so with his blessing. He will be able to see the proceedings in his hospital room.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU

Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world. Elders James E. Faust, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Alexander B. Morrison are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Joe J. Christensen and Lynn A. Sorensen are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon Elders Waldo P. Call and Helio R. Camargo were released as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Sustained as the Young Men's General Presidency were Elders Jack H. Goaslind, LeGrand R. Curtis, and Robert K. Dellenbach. Elder H. Verlan Andersen was sustained as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" Following the singing, Elder Dean L. Larsen of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Oh Say, What Is Truth?"

Elder Dean L. Larsen offered the invocation.

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**President Hinckley**

The choir will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," following which Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Coun-

cil of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

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**Elder M. Russell Ballard****Moral cleanliness of youth**

My remarks are directed primarily to you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. The subject is the moral cleanliness of our youth. The leaders of the Church care so deeply about every one of you that I feel an urgent need to warn you once again of the consequences of moral misconduct. At the same time, I want to impress upon you the great promises extended to those who remain morally clean.

We are aware that the youth of the Church are growing up in a world that is plagued with teenage moral misconduct. We also know that sexual sin has increased tremendously during the past twenty years. Far too many of the youth, particularly American youth, have violated the law of chastity before they reach the age of nineteen. Unfortunately, the youth of the Church are not immune. For this reason, I want to assure you young men that your leaders know of the challenges you face in today's society. However, we have confidence that you can develop the strength and integrity to surmount these challenges and live for the blessings that are promised to those who remain morally clean.

I emphasize that you do *not* need to be caught in the trap of being immoral—not one of you, ever. Each one of you must look into the future to understand the consequences of your actions, both good and bad. The cartoon character Ziggy said it this way: "Our future is shaped by our past, . . . so be very careful what you do in your past!"

**Act with your future in mind**

Let me relate a personal experience to show the importance of keeping your future continually in mind. When I was in the Aaronic Priesthood, I and one of my friends attended general priesthood meeting in this tabernacle and found ourselves over here by the stairs where we didn't belong. President George Albert Smith, in his kindly way, saw our plight and invited us to sit on the stairs. As we sat there and watched the proceedings of the meeting, I did not believe that I ever again would get that close to this pulpit. I remember saying to my friend as we left the Tabernacle, "It would sure be nice to be a General Authority; then you would have one of those seats on the stand to sit in."

I know now by personal experience that, in some ways, brethren, the benches you are sitting on are much more comfortable than these on the stand. Now the point: As an Aaronic Priesthood holder, I had no idea that the time would come in my life when I would serve as a bishop, a mission president, a Seventy, and now as an Apostle. We cannot foresee what the Lord has in mind for us. Our only course of action is to be prepared and worthy for whatever he requires. We must govern our actions every day with our future in mind.

**Satan blinds us to eternal rewards**

One of Satan's clever tactics is to tempt us to concentrate on the present and ignore the future. The Lord warned Joseph Smith that "Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away from the truth,

that they become blinded and understand not the things which are prepared for them" (D&C 78:10). The "things which are prepared for them" are the promised rewards of eternal life, which come as a result of obedience. The devil attempts to blind us to these rewards. President Heber J. Grant said that "if we are faithful in keeping the commandments of God His promises will be fulfilled to the very letter. . . . The trouble is, the adversary of men's souls blinds their minds. He throws dust, so to speak, in their eyes, and they are blinded with the things of this world" (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941], pp. 44-45). He tempts us with the transitory pleasures of the world so that we will not focus our minds and efforts on the things that bring eternal joy. The devil is a dirty fighter, and we must be aware of his tactics.

### Deceptions about sin and repentance

Recently I talked with several groups of young men and women in Utah and Idaho. They told me that some of our youth feel that they can be immoral during their teen years and then repent when they decide to go on a mission or be married in the temple. Some young men talk about a mission as a time when they will be forgiven from their past sins. They have the notion that a few transgressions now are no big deal because they can repent quickly, go on a mission, and then live happily ever after.

Young men, please believe me when I tell you that this scenario is a gross deception by Satan; it is a fairy tale. Sin will always, *always*, result in suffering. It may come sooner, or it may come later, but it will come. The scriptures state that you will "stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God" (Jacob 6:9) and that you will experience "a lively sense of . . . guilt, and pain, and anguish" (Mosiah 2:38).

A related misconception is that repentance is easy. President Kimball

said that "one has not begun to repent until he has suffered intensely for his sins. . . . If a person hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], pp. 88, 99). You need only talk to a person who has truly repented of serious sin to understand that the momentary pleasure of an immoral act is simply not worth the pain that always follows.

### Peer pressure to be immoral

The youth told me that some are tempted to be immoral because they want to be accepted by their peers. For the young men, it may mean acceptance based on some sort of macho image. For the young women, it may be the need to feel they are accepted by having a boyfriend. Acceptance by your peers must not come at the expense of your virtue and self-esteem. King Benjamin indicates that those guilty of sin will "shrink from the presence of the Lord" (Mosiah 2:38). In a very real way, those who have been immoral shrink from the presence of others: their friends, their parents, other members of their family, and Church leaders.

### Blessings of being morally clean

Now, let us consider the grand blessings the Lord has promised those who are obedient to the commandment to be morally clean. You never need to repent of a sin you have not committed. That seems obvious, but I want to emphasize it. Repentance is a great blessing, but you should never make yourself sick just so you can try out the remedy. You are infinitely better to maintain your spiritual health by staying morally clean. If you feel confident in the presence of your parents, peers, and priesthood leaders, you can sense how you will feel when you have the confidence and acceptance of the Savior.

Can you think of any better promise for the future than spoken by King Benjamin: "I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and

happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

The youth told me that a clean conscience improves their self-esteem. Their relationships with others are better, and they enjoy a very positive acceptance. In fact, some of them said they have lots more fun because of their high standards. They never have to worry about the dreaded diseases that often follow those who transgress the law of chastity.

Here are some suggestions that will help you stay morally clean.

### **Understand the standards**

First, understand the standards of moral cleanliness. The Lord said concerning his commandments, "I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation" (D&C 82:9). In other words, commandments are guidance for happy living.

Our youth seem confused about the definition of moral cleanliness. Some young men and women take a certain definition and then push it to its limits to see how far they can go without being immoral by that definition. I suggest an opposite approach.

Several years ago, Elder Hartman Rector, who spent twenty-six years as a navy pilot, gave an interesting analogy. The navy had a rule that said, in effect, "Thou shalt not fly thy airplane in the trees." That makes sense. But to ensure that he obeyed this rule, he set his own standard: "Thou shalt not fly thy airplane closer than 5,000 feet to the trees." He said, "When you do this you make the navy's commandment of not flying in the trees easy to live" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 172; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 131).

Some standards must not be compromised. If you are not sure about the

Church's standard of morality, talk to your parents or to your priesthood leaders. Also, you can know the correct standards of moral conduct by following the promptings of the Spirit. These promptings never will lead you to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, unclean, or ashamed. You must be sensitive to these promptings because your physical passions can obscure them if you are not careful.

### **Commit to live by the standards**

Second, once you understand the standards, you must determine that you will live by them. This kind of commitment is a fundamental gospel principle. The scriptures teach that "there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it" (Abraham 3:17). You must be the same way. You must be as Joseph who fled from the presence of Potiphar's wife rather than sin against God (see Genesis 39:7-12). You must avoid moral misconduct by making a firm decision to avoid compromising situations and to stand firm for what is right. You must have self-control and high goals. I urge every one of you tonight to set a goal to be morally clean, if you have not already done so.

### **You need not face temptation alone**

Third, while you must exercise your agency and bear the responsibility for your decisions, you need not face temptation alone. Just two weeks ago at a stake conference, Elder Charles "Tiny" Grant, one of our fine Regional Representatives, shared an experience with us. He said that some years ago while he was the football coach at Ricks College, he met a man named Hal Barton, who was famous for his love of fishing. He was warned, however, that "although Hal knows where to find the big fish, he often goes into strong waters to find them."

Their first opportunity to go fishing together was in February as the ice was

breaking up. As they walked together up the river, Hal pointed to an island about fifty yards away and said, "Coach, that is where we will find the big ones." The day was cold, and now they had to cross a dangerous part of the river. The coach soon discovered that the rocks were round and slick, and the water was only inches from the top of his waders. Since he is six feet five inches tall, that meant it was deep. He was about to tell Hal that he was afraid he couldn't cross the water, but realized that the football coach could not admit that he was afraid.

Just then Hal said, "Coach, this is how we are going to cross the water. You take a step and get a firm footing while I hold your hand and arm steady. Then I will take a step while you stand firmly and furnish the support. We will work our way through this roiling, swift water over these slippery rocks." With this mutual support, they crossed the river safely and caught the big ones.

This is an excellent analogy for the way you can live the Lord's standard of morality. Some who have gone before you have a firm footing, having lived the moral standard and experienced the blessings of doing so. As you take steps into the deep water of life, they will support you. Then, as you gain a firm footing in righteousness, you can help others who come after you.

Generally, your most important source of support is your parents. Their teachings should be a powerful influence in your decision to be clean. I realize, however, that morality can be a sensitive subject. I urge you young men to initiate conversations with your parents about their moral values. Ask them to help you define the standards that will keep you morally clean.

Also seek counsel from your priesthood leaders, especially your bishop. He knows the standards, and he knows what to teach you. Seek opportunities to be with him. You can expect him to ask pointed, searching questions. Trust him. Confide in him. Ask him to help

you understand what the Lord expects from you. Make a commitment to live according to the Church's standards of morality. A meaningful relationship with an adult leader is vital to help you keep morally clean and worthy. Your Aaronic Priesthood advisers will teach you and give you the support and direction you may need. Ask them for guidance. They will know how to help you.

### **Choose good friends**

Fourth, choose friends who share your standards, both members and non-members. Such friends will make peer pressure uplifting and positive. The young men and women I talked to said that acceptance of the peer group is a powerful influence either for good or bad. When your friends observe high moral standards, you are more likely to do the same. When you have established a strong bond with such friends, you can reach out to those who have not made firm decisions about morality. Help them to know that immorality is not "cool."

### **Respect women**

Fifth, you young men must cultivate a considerate attitude toward women of all ages. The young women asked me to tell you that they want you to respect them and show them common, sincere courtesy. Do not hesitate to show your good manners by opening a door for them, taking the initiative in inviting them on a date, and standing as they enter a room. Believe it or not, in this age of equal rights, the young women want you to extend these simple courtesies.

### **Seek the Lord's help**

Finally, seek help from the Lord, the source of spiritual power. If you "call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually," you will "not be tempted above that which ye can bear"

(Alma 13:28). Your daily prayers must include a heartfelt request for help in keeping your commitment to remain morally clean. When you do this, the Lord will bless you with the strength to remain morally clean.

### **Purity precedes power**

Remember, young men, that purity precedes power. The Lord said, "But purify your hearts before me; and then go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel unto every creature who has not received it" (D&C 112:28). Missionaries discover this very early in their missions and make every effort to be worthy so they can serve with power.

### **The hope of repentance**

Now, just a word to those of you who have violated the moral law. I hold out the hope of repentance to you. The Savior's atonement provides forgiveness when you have repented completely. You will necessarily suffer because of sin, but you can know the joy of being forgiven completely. Your bishop can guide you through the process of repentance, so talk to him as soon as possible. You must also seek divine forgiveness through your personal prayers. Alma said: "Never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul" (Alma 38:8). Once you have forsaken your sins, never return to them, because "unto

that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return" (D&C 82:7).

### **We need not fear the future**

Tonight, I echo the prayer offered by President Hugh B. Brown in a setting such as this more than twenty years ago, when the moral misconduct of youth was not as commonplace as it is today. He prayed, "O Father, help these young men who are listening tonight, when they go home to get on their knees and commit themselves to thee; and then they may know, and I promise them in thy name that they will know, that with thy help they need not fear the future" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, pp. 116-17; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, p. 94).

Brethren, we need not fear the future if we will keep the Lord's commandments and live to be his worthy servants. You can stay morally clean and prepare now for a happy future. May the Lord bless every one of you to so live I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Marion D. Hanks, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder J Ballard Washburn, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at the April conference.

## **Elder Marion D. Hanks**

### **Changing channels**

A few days ago, I enjoyed the challenging experience of speaking to a large group of younger teenagers. Thereafter, I received a special letter from a wonderful mother who, with her husband, a bishop, had accompanied their fourteen-year-old son, with some

of his friends, to the meeting. These are the last few words of her letter:

"Please accept my thanks. . . . You spoke seriously to a group of youth who are used to being told how wonderful they are. They *are* wonderful, but they needed to do some heavy thinking for a change. You helped them do that. Thank you!"

I was pleased that the meeting had encouraged some serious thinking and consideration among at least some of those present. We referred, as we began, to the aimless habit some of us have of channel hopping or dial switching as we sit in front of a television set or radio, and suggested that in preparation, I had done a similar kind of searching through my memory and notes. I was seeking to select, out of many observations and experiences and thoughts, a few that might make a difference to those who were seriously listening and might thereafter think about what they had heard. I would like to do the same with you in these few moments this evening.

### The object of good parents

A picture forms on my monitor involving a father aboard an airplane on a short business trip. He has with him his five-year-old son and is almost wishing his son were not there because it is a very rough trip. There are downdrafts and updrafts and head winds alternating with tail winds, and some passengers are feeling a bit queasy. Apprehensively, the father glances at his son and finds him grinning from ear to ear. "Dad," he says, "do they do this just to make it fun for the kids?"

Good parents and family and leaders and friends do go to great lengths to make it fun for the kids, but the fun they are thinking of is wholesome fun; it hurts no one, and it lifts the spirit and is good to remember tomorrow and through a lifetime and forever. It never detracts from the real, long-term joy we came into this world to experience.

The next scene on the screen illustrates that clearly—it is a personal testimony of a noble and loving father to his children shortly before his death. Says Lehi: "I have spoken these few words unto you . . . in the last days of my probation; and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object

save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls" (2 Nephi 2:30).

That is the object also of every good father and mother and grandparent and teacher and priesthood leader and friend.

### Choose a course of giving

As we switch rapidly to another scene or two tonight, look for the principles of love and agency shining through the thoughts and illustrations. They are central principles of the gospel, encompassing "all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40), as Jesus said of the commandments to love God and love our neighbor, and they emphasize the individual responsibility and accountability in our choices with respect to all other virtues and values (see Matthew 22:36–40).

The Bible teaches us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that "Jesus Christ your Redeemer . . . so loved the world that he gave his own life" (D&C 34:1, 3).

God so loved that *he gave*.

Christ so loved that *he gave*.

We are here on this earth to learn, after the example of the Father and the Son, to love enough to *give*—to use our agency unselfishly. We are here to learn to do the will of the Father.

The love we speak of is not just a word or a feeling or a sentiment. John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

So we are speaking of choosing a course of sharing, of giving, of graciousness, of kindness, not as optional elements of the gospel, but as the heart of it. Decency and honor and unselfishness, good manners and good taste are expected of us. What really matters, after all, is what kind of people we are and *that* we are daily, hourly, deciding and manifesting. Jesus said, "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:24).

### Are you looking at me?

A sobering and poignant scene appears on our screen as we switch channels. A grieving young father and his two children sit before a television set in their home after a makeshift dinner. The children have been staying with Grandmother while their mother has slowly slipped away in a lingering illness; now they and their father are home again after her funeral. The little girl drops off to sleep and is carried to her bed. The little boy fights off sleepiness until he finally asks his father if tonight, just tonight, he can sleep with him in his bed. As the two lie silently in the dark, the lad speaks: "Daddy, are you looking at me?" "Yes, son," the father replies, "I am looking at you."

The boy sighs and, exhausted, sleeps. The father waits a time and then, weeping, cries out in the dark, in anxious anguish: "God, are you looking at me? If you are, maybe I can make it. Without you, I know I can't."

Our Heavenly Father is looking at us. He loves us and he wants us to choose the path that leads us to happiness here and eternal life hereafter. In his plan he authorizes us to act for him, to be instruments of his concern for his children. But he won't force any of us to make choices that lead to happiness. He has given each of us the right and responsibility to make personal choices, individual decisions, and has made us accountable for them. He not only affects our lives, he is affected by our lives, and sometimes he weeps for us.

The same prophet Lehi, to whom we referred, taught his children these truths:

"Because . . . they are redeemed . . . they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon. . . .

"Wherefore . . . they are free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:26-27).

### A deacon chooses correctly

Switch channels with me to a scene on a Saturday night in a ranch home kitchen, where a boy who has just answered the telephone nervously approaches his mother with a question: "Mom," he says, "Bob is on the phone. He and his dad and Tom and his dad are going snowmobiling and shooting tomorrow morning, and they want to know if I can go with them." The mother seems startled at the question and uncertain as she answers. (Later, she explains that she was strongly tempted to respond sharply to her boy, reminding him that he had duties on Sunday morning, that in their family they went to church together, and that when Dad returned later that night he would not consider such a thing.) But instead, she says to her son, "Richard, you are twelve years old. You hold the priesthood. You are president of the deacons quorum. I am sure Dad would want you to make up your own mind and answer Bob yourself."

The boy goes back to the telephone, and the mother goes to her room and prays that their son will give the right answer. Nothing more is said about the matter, and on Sunday morning the lad and his parents go into town to church, park in the lot across the street, and are crossing, arm-in-arm, when a pickup truck passes. Two men and two boys are in the seat, snowmobiles in the truck bed, guns slung in the rear window. The boys wave to Richard as they pass. He pauses a moment and says, "Gee, I wish . . ." The mother catches her breath a bit, and then Richard finishes: "Gee, I wish I had been able to talk Bob and Tom into coming to priesthood meeting this morning."

The mother, telling the story, thanks the Lord for this choice lad and his personal decision to do the right thing. And then she weeps freely as she explains how important that was to all of them. You see, their son was killed in a farm accident that week.

We push the remote control, and a classic statement from a great mind and heart stands out boldly: "Ah, my soul, look to the road you are walking on. He who picks up one end of the stick picks up the other. He who chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to" (Harry Emerson Fosdick).

### **A young man aboard ship in wartime**

I would like to share with you young men tonight one very unhappy recording in my mind of a promising young man aboard ship in wartime, who chose the beginning of a road that led him to a destination that was one of the last places in the world he really wanted to be. His initial mistakes were understandable; he was young and away from home and friends and familiar standards, and he wanted to be independent. His intentions were not evil, but because he was a little arrogant and proud, he rejected good counsel and let himself be led away by individuals who were described perfectly in the Book of Mormon, thousands of years ago, in their sinful persuasion of others. It is written of them that "they do it for a token of bravery" (Moroni 9:10).

Imitation men being imitated; these "macho" visions of life, so pitifully empty, can lead only to tragedy.

There is good, and there is evil, and there is a way to help us all tell the difference:

"All things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil. . . .

" . . . My brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:12, 15-16).

### **A football player chooses wisely**

A new picture comes on the screen and rivets our attention. A strong-look-

ing young football player is responding to questions from sportswriters about his development from a disappointing earlier career to one of great promise. What had brought about the change?

"You know," he said, "in high school you can sort of make up your own world and be king of it. In the real world, you're with everybody else, and you're just part of it."

He seems to be wisely using his agency now to follow a more constructive path. He had been on a road that seemed to be leading where he really did not want to be, and he had been mature enough to turn around and choose a better way.

### **A young convert feels the Spirit**

Oh, we have seen remarkable events as we have flipped the remote control of observation and memory. One of the most touching involved a young lady convert to the Church who had found in a Latter-day Saint fellow student, and in her fellow student's home, where she was invited for family home evening, a spirit and a caring relationship she had never known in her own life. She said that since her baptism, things had not really materially changed in her own home; there were still abuse and argument and alcohol and foul language. "But," she said, "there is one room at my house where I can go and shut the door and read the scriptures and listen to good music and pray and feel the Spirit of the Lord. In my little room I can have that blessing. One day, if the Lord will help me, I will marry a man with whom I can live in a home where we can have the Spirit of the Lord always."

### **A scene from Nha Trang, Vietnam**

There is one last scene I would call up for you from my journal. The sobering realities of our present Middle East involvement, where many of our people are in threatening conditions, make this memory particularly pertinent and particularly appreciated. I read it as I



wrote it in Nha Trang, Vietnam, in May 1967:

"There was a memorable meeting this morning, which began with a senior military chaplain of another church addressing us warmly as 'My brothers in Christ.' This touched me deeply, and the meeting that went along was consistent with his gentle beginning.

"It was a very special, tender meeting; the Spirit was strong.

"It was uncomfortably warm in the room where we met. There were two ancient air conditioners, but they were ineffective. In fact, we discovered when we finally opened the door that it was cooler outside than in. Notwithstanding this, a great spirit was felt and a sweet experience enjoyed.

"Outside the room after the meeting, I walked quietly down the passage-way alongside the large room where we had met. As I passed the back door, I looked in and saw a kind of human barrier that had been set up to separate the many young men who were lingering in

the front part of the room from a few who were in the back. Three men had their hands on the head of another who sat on a chair. All four were dressed in battle gear; two had returned from air strikes to the north just in time for the meeting, and one was shortly to go. The three members of the district presidency were giving a blessing to an officer senior to them all, setting him apart as a district missionary."

For some reason this sweet scene affected me more deeply than any priesthood sermon I have heard. Priesthood to them meant the right and the power to serve, to act in the name of the Lord as his agents and in his interests with their fellowmen. This scene I hope I will never forget.

The scriptures teach us, "My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him" (2 Chronicles 29:11).

That we may, faithfully, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder J Ballard Washburn

### President Benson's early life

Brethren, it's an honor to be with you. I humbly pray for the Spirit to guide the things that I say, that we may look at a few brief events in the life of our prophet and resolve to try harder to be like him, to be true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Elder Kimball quoted Mr. F. M. Bareham as saying, "When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants discovering [and, we might add, or God wants us to read the Book of Mormon], God sends a baby into the world to do it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, p. 84).

And so it was that on August 4, 1899, in Whitney, Idaho, Sarah Benson started into labor. Her husband, George, gave her a blessing. "Dr. Allan Cutler attended her in the bedroom of their farm home, with both grand-

mothers, Louisa Benson and Margaret Dunkley, there. The delivery was protracted. As the baby, a large boy, was delivered, the doctor couldn't get him to breathe and quickly laid him on the bed and pronounced, 'There's no hope for the child, but I believe we can save the mother.' While Dr. Cutler feverishly attended to Sarah, the grandmothers rushed to the kitchen, praying silently as they worked, and returned shortly with two pans of water—one cold, the other warm. Alternately, they dipped the baby first in cold and then in warm water, until finally they heard a cry. The 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> pound boy was alive! Later, both grandmothers bore testimony that the Lord had spared the child. George and Sarah named him Ezra Taft Benson" (Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987], pp. 13-14).

When Ezra was age twelve, his father was called on a mission, and being the oldest child, Ezra was left to help care for his mother, who was expecting, and his six brothers and sisters. A smallpox epidemic caused them all to be seriously ill, and the mother became critically ill, but they refused the insistence of the doctor that the father come home. And the Lord blessed them, and they weathered this and many other difficult situations while the father served a mission.

"In the early fall of 1920 Ezra spent a weekend in Logan preparatory to enrolling for winter quarter. He and a cousin were standing on a curb on Main Street when an attractive young woman drove by in a Ford convertible and waved to a friend. A few minutes later she drove by a second time and waved again. 'Who is that?' Ezra asked. 'Flora Amussen,' his cousin replied. There was something about the girl that impressed Ezra, and he responded enthusiastically, 'When I come down here this winter, I'm going to [court] her.' 'Like heck you will,' the cousin answered, adding, 'she's too popular for a farm boy like you.' 'That makes it all the more interesting,' Ezra countered. He received the distinct impression that he would marry her" (*Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 46-47).

### **President Benson's mission and marriage**

In the summer of 1921, at age twenty-one, Ezra received a letter from President Heber J. Grant calling him on a mission to Great Britain. July 14, 1921, he went through the Logan Temple with his parents, and two days later, he said good-bye to his parents and girlfriend and started on his way to England (see *Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 50). Elder Benson studied and worked hard but didn't feel like he was doing too well and wrote in his journal that he was disgusted with his "frail attempt at speaking." But as he matured spiritually, he was invited to speak at the South

Shields Branch. He was assigned to speak on the Apostasy, but instead he "gave a strong and impressive discourse of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon." He later said, "I spoke with a freedom I had never experienced. Afterwards, I couldn't recall what I had said, but several non-members surrounded me and said, 'Tonight, we received a witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and we are ready for baptism.' It was the experience of a lifetime. . . . It was the first experience of that kind I'd had, where I knew that the Lord was with me" (*Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 55).

President Benson married his sweetheart September 10, 1926, in the Salt Lake Temple, after they had both served missions. He has said that Sister Benson had more faith in him than he had in himself. After sixty-four years of marriage, they are an example of love and devotion to us all.

Now, each of you young men can know that the Lord is with you and that he loves each one of you. You can follow this great prophet and serve a mission and be married in the temple. You can live a life of service as he has and be a disciple of Jesus.

### **God's chosen prophet**

When President Kimball died, we were living in Arizona. President Kimball had been in our home. We had knelt with him in family prayer, and he had eaten bread and milk with us. We knew he was a prophet of God.

I wanted a witness of the Spirit that President Benson was God's chosen prophet. I wanted to know more than that he was just a good person and next in line after President Kimball. The Lord was kind to me, and, after fasting and prayer, I received, by the Spirit, the witness that President Benson was indeed God's chosen prophet for this time, with a special calling and a special message for our day.

Today there are thousands who have had a spiritual awakening because

they are studying and following the teachings of the Book of Mormon as the prophet has admonished us to do. There are thousands who feel they have received a special personal message from the prophet as he has spoken to the young men of the Church, the young women of the Church, the children, the elderly, the parents. There are thousands who are better people today because they have stripped themselves of pride, as counseled by this great prophet. Yes, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

I bear witness that Ezra Taft Benson was born to be a prophet, has lived so he could be a prophet, and has been called of God to be a prophet in our day. He has set a pattern of service and endurance that each of us should seek to follow.

### We ever pray for thee

In closing, may I read the words of a song that were sung this afternoon by the young ladies' chorus that express our feelings for our prophet.

We ever pray for thee, our prophet dear,  
That God will give to thee comfort and cheer;  
As the advancing years furrow thy brow,  
Still may the light within shine bright as now.

We ever pray for thee with all our hearts,  
That strength be given thee to do thy part,  
To guide and counsel us from day to day,  
To shed a holy light around our way.  
We ever pray for thee with fervent love;  
And as the children's prayer is heard above,  
Thou shalt be ever blest, and God will give  
All that is meet and best while thou shalt live. [*Hymns*, no. 23]

May God bless and sustain his prophet, and may we follow him, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

We have listened to Elders Marion D. Hanks and J. Ballard Washburn of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, also sustained as a member of the Seventy at the April conference.

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The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

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## Elder Durrel A. Woolsey

### The patriarchal key

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Could we add, "lose his own soul, and his family"?

As I left California, bound for Salt Lake City to receive training and be set apart for a mission in Arizona, I experienced for a moment an alarming feel-

ing. I had lost all of my keys. The keys to the cars, home, business, and Church calling had been left behind. I had the depressing feeling that I no longer had any keys; even my pockets seemed empty.

Then came the exhilarating thought that I still had the most important key of all, a key that I will hold eternally, if I remain worthy. That key, of course, is the patriarchal key with my family.

I became aware of how temporary most other keys are, especially keys that control material things that will one day become victims of moth and rust. Priesthood keys of leadership and other keys of presidency are extremely vital; but for the most part, even they are temporary in nature. Eventually, after faithfully serving, you will then relinquish those keys to someone else.

We will, however, be blessed to continue to hold our patriarchal key. Fathers, you hold the key to accomplish the work stated by several of the prophets as vitally important. President Harold B. Lee said the most important work you will ever do "will be done within the walls of your own home," and President David O. McKay cautioned that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home."

### **Importance of honorable fathers**

Many in the world are alarmed, and with some justification, at the plight and deteriorating condition of families. The most powerful thrust toward a resolution of this significant problem would be an honorable father, full of integrity and fidelity, giving righteous leadership to his family. That joyful work and calling is to do whatever is necessary to chart a course for you and your family to unitedly return and live with Heavenly Father.

We likely will not be called upon to endure the great physical hardships suffered by so many of our pioneer forefathers. Ours is a much more sinister and demoralizing challenge. Often this challenge will approach cloaked in confusing masks of misunderstood rights and agency or the enticements and allurements of a misguided world. We daily face the "anything for a thrill" crowd or the "What's in it for me?" society.

The anti-Christ Korihor, in the Book of Mormon, taught a similar type of damaging doctrine when he said, "There could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management

of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime" (Alma 30:17). This rhetoric could blend into much of the accepted doctrine of the world today.

### **Fathers should become heroes**

So where is safety? How does a father go about safely guiding his most priceless possession through the reefs and shoals?

Dad, you need to be a hero in your family. They need a hero. They will have strong peer pressure and temptation to adopt the so-called heroes of today who are not worthy of their attention and most certainly not their emulation. The heroes or superstars in the sports and entertainment world, and there are many, frequently become examples of dishonesty, instability, and infidelity. They flagrantly and indifferently flaunt those weaknesses of character and immorality before a doting and accepting world, as Korihor said, "according to the management of the creature" (Alma 30:17).

Could not, should not, Father become the hero to his family? A father worthy of attention, worthy of emulation? Most certainly, but how?

### **Commit a generous amount of time**

First of all, a generous amount of your time is required—not a superficial moment here and there, not the tired and worn-out phrase, "We'll talk about that later," but an honest, generous piece of your day on a continuing basis, even at the sacrifice of things social, things personally entertaining, or even things financially rewarding. All of the money in the world, significant worldly accomplishments which may include the upper rungs of the success ladder, or the personal enjoyment of athletic and sporting activities, will not return you and your family intact to live with Heavenly Father.

President Joseph F. Smith quoted from the Savior, as stated in Mark: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Then President Smith continued: "What would it profit me, though I should go out into the world and win strangers to the fold of God and lose my own children? Oh! God, let me not lose my own. I can not afford to lose mine, whom God has given to me and whom I am responsible for before the Lord, and who are dependent upon me for guidance, for instruction, for proper influence" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 462).

The salvation of our families will require all that we have to save all that we have. So you will make the time commitment. Great! Positive, wonderful benefits will begin to flow to you and your family almost immediately.

### **"Love thy wife with all thy heart"**

So what next? I mentioned fidelity. It is absolutely essential that you set an undeviating course of loyalty and faithfulness to your companion, to whom you have previously made these very commitments and promises. The example of your great love and respect for her, the two of you being as one, will establish a singular guiding strength that your children will desire to follow. Your voices and actions blending together in a united front as you teach and lead your little family will be the trumpet with a certain sound of strength and unity leading to safety. Synonyms of *fidelity* are *allegiance* and *devotion*. They will be critical supports to your foundation of fidelity. "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

### **Search the scriptures daily**

Father, one of your greatest resources will be the scriptures. You

would not consider making a large investment in a rather complicated and technical piece of equipment, then begin its operation, without an involved study of the handbook of instruction. Further, you would likely reference that handbook often. The handbook of instructions for your somewhat complicated, very sizable investment called family is certainly the original handbook of instruction—that being our beloved scriptures. They are complete with instructions and examples. Often, you will find the answer before the question is asked. Daily research is required. It is also vital to maintain open communication lines with the Fountainhead of all wisdom and truth through your daily family and personal prayers.

### **Follow the prophet**

Finally, what better resource for direction could we have than a living prophet? A great safety net can envelop you and your family as you follow the Brethren. How blessed you are, Dad, to have living oracles of God to update you with current instruction to guide your family through modern-day challenges. To not hear, or ignore them, to not understand and heed those instructions would be like beginning a trip across the sea in a small boat without a compass.

Well, that's it, Dad. You must become the family hero, worthy of not only their attention but their emulation. This will require your constant investment of sufficient time, complete emotional and physical fidelity, with unity of purpose between you and your eternal companion. This will require your constant dependency upon the Lord, demonstrated through scripture study and prayer. This will require that you follow the Brethren in every sense of the word—hearing, understanding, and doing. This simple formula will unite and strengthen your beloved family and bring countless blessings from our Father.

May God bless all fathers to righteously obtain and maintain this patriarchal key to the blessing of families throughout the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Come, all ye sons of God

One of my most vivid memories is attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing the opening hymn, "Come, All Ye Sons of God Who Have Received the Priesthood." Tonight, to this capacity audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in chapels worldwide, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you, Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood; let us consider our callings, let us reflect on our responsibilities, let us determine our duty, and let us follow Jesus Christ, our Lord.

While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we hold membership in the same church and are united as one in our priesthood callings.

Two weeks ago I attended a sacrament meeting where the children responded to the theme, I Belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These boys and girls demonstrated they were in training for service to the Lord and to others. The music was beautiful, the recitations skillfully rendered, and the spirit heaven-sent. My eleven-year-old grandson had spoken of the First Vision as he presented his part on the program. Afterward, as he came to his parents and grandparents, I said to him, "Tommy, I think you are almost ready to be a missionary."

He replied, "Not yet; there is much I have to learn."

### For the strength of youth

To help him and all youth prepare for their service to God, a new booklet, entitled *For the Strength of Youth*, has

been published under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. The booklet features standards from the writings and teachings of Church leaders and from scriptures, adherence to which will bring the blessings of our Heavenly Father and the guidance of His Son to each of us.

May I share with you, as I shared with the sisters in the women's meeting held last week, portions of the introduction to this new guide to your mortal journey, this new road map to help you chart an undeviating course toward eternal life. The statement by the First Presidency begins:

"Our beloved young men and women,

"We want you to know that we love you. We have great confidence in you. . . .

"We desire everything in this world for you that is right and good. . . . You are choice spirits who have been held in reserve to come forth in this day when the temptations, responsibilities, and opportunities are the very greatest. You are at a critical time in your lives. . . .

"We counsel you to [be] morally clean. . . .

"You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible! Years of happiness can be lost in the foolish gratification of a momentary desire for pleasure. . . .

"You can avoid the burden of guilt and sin and all of the attending heartaches . . . as you keep the standards outlined in the scriptures and emphasized in this pamphlet.

"We pray that you—the young and rising generation—will keep your bodies and minds clean, free from the con-

taminations of the world, that you will be fit and pure vessels to bear triumphantly the responsibilities of the kingdom of God in preparation for the second coming of our Savior" (*For the Strength of Youth* [pamphlet, 1990], pp. 3–5).

May I review with you, the young men of the Church, these special standards referred to in the introduction just read? There are twelve items, followed by a conclusion. I shall treat briefly each standard.

### 1. Dating

Begin to prepare for a temple marriage. Proper dating is a part of that preparation. In cultures where dating is appropriate, do not date until you are sixteen years old. Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Make sure your parents meet and become acquainted with those you date. Because dating is a preparation for marriage, date only those who have high standards.

Be careful to go to places where there is a good environment, where you won't be faced with temptation.

A wise father said to his son, "If you ever find yourself in a place where you shouldn't ought to be, get out!" Good advice for all of us.

### 2. Dress and appearance

Servants of the Lord have always counseled us to dress modestly to show respect for our Heavenly Father and for ourselves. The way you dress sends messages about yourself to others and often influences the way you and others act. Dress in such a way as to bring out the best in yourself and those around you. Avoid extremes in clothing and appearance.

### 3. Friendshipship

Everyone needs good friends. Your circle of friends will greatly influ-

ence your thinking and behavior, just as you will theirs. When you share common values with your friends, you can strengthen and encourage each other. Treat everyone with kindness and dignity. Many nonmembers have come into the Church through friends who have involved them in Church activities.

### 4. Honesty

The oft-repeated adage is ever true: "Honesty's the best policy" (Miguel de Cervantes, in *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed., comp. John Bartlett [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968], p. 197). A Latter-day Saint young man lives as he teaches and as he believes. He is honest with others. He is honest with himself. He is honest with God. He is honest by habit and as a matter of course. When a difficult decision must be made, he never asks himself, What will others think? but rather, What will I think of myself?

For some, there will come the temptation to dishonor a personal standard of honesty. In a business law class at the university I attended, I remember that one particular classmate never prepared for the class discussions. I thought to myself, How is he going to pass the final examination?

I discovered the answer when he came to the classroom for the final examination, on a winter's day, wearing on his bare feet only a pair of sandals. I was surprised and watched him as the class began. All of his books had been placed upon the floor. He slipped the sandals from his feet; and then, with toes that he had trained and had prepared with glycerine, he skillfully turned the pages of one of the books which he had placed on the floor, thereby viewing the answers to the examination questions.

He received one of the highest grades in that course on business law. But the day of reckoning came. Later, as he prepared to take his comprehensive examination, for the first time the dean of his particular discipline said, "This

year I shall depart from tradition and shall conduct an oral, rather than a written, test." Our favorite, trained-toe expert found that he had his foot in his mouth on that occasion and failed the examination.

## 5. Language

How you speak and the words you use tell much about the image you choose to portray. Use language to build and uplift those around you. Profane, vulgar, or crude language and inappropriate or off-color jokes are offensive to the Lord. Never misuse the name of God or Jesus Christ. The Lord said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

## 6. Media: movies, television, radio, videocassettes, books, and magazines

Our Heavenly Father has counseled us to seek after "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13). Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you.

Pornography is especially dangerous and addictive. Curious exploration of pornography can become a controlling habit, leading to coarser material and to sexual transgression.

Don't be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what's being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father's standards. In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don't see it, don't read it, don't participate.

Recently there appeared in the newspaper an observation by comedian Steve Allen. It describes one of the greater problems of our time:

"Steve Allen doesn't find anything funny about television's trend toward stronger language and adult-oriented themes. The veteran comedian lashed out at current television trends in an

opinion piece published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

"The 'flow is carrying all of us right into the sewer,' he wrote. 'The very sort of language parents forbid their children to use is now being encouraged not only by anything-goes cable entrepreneurs but the once high-minded networks,' said Allen. 'Shows that depict children and others using vulgar language only point up the collapse of the American family,' he said."

Perhaps Mr. Allen was referring to a review in a recent issue of *Newsweek* magazine entitled "A Season on the Brink." "Desperate to outrun [competition], the Big Three [networks] launch lineups that are rocking, ribald, real . . . and risky," reads the subheadline. A summary statement declares, "The networks . . . are suddenly turning the airwaves blue" (Harry F. Waters, 3 Sep. 1990, pp. 70-71).

## 7. Mental and physical health

The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body, just as consistent scripture study and prayer strengthen the mind and spirit.

Hard drugs, wrongful use of prescription drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco products destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Any form of alcohol, including beer, is harmful to your spirit and your body. Tobacco can enslave you, weaken your lungs, and shorten your life.

## 8. Music and dancing

Music can help you draw closer to your Heavenly Father. It can be used to educate, edify, inspire, and unite. However, music can, by its tempo, beat, intensity, and lyrics, dull your spiritual sensitivity. You cannot afford to fill



your minds with unworthy music. Dancing can be enjoyable and provide an opportunity to meet new people and strengthen friendships. Plan and attend dances where dress, grooming, lighting, dancing styles, lyrics, and music contribute to an atmosphere in which the Spirit of the Lord may be present.

## 9. Sexual purity

Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you. Tears inevitably follow transgression. Men, take care not to make women weep, for God counts their tears.

President David O. McKay advised, "I implore you to think clean thoughts." He then made this significant declaration of truth: "Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want to control our actions, we must control our thinking." Brethren, fill your minds with good thoughts, and your actions will be proper. May each one of you be able to echo in truth the line from Tennyson spoken by Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure" (in *Familiar Quotations*, p. 647).

From ancient times comes an example which emphasizes this truth. Darius, through the proper rites, had been recognized as legitimate king of Egypt. His rival, Alexander, had been declared legitimate son of Ammon; he, too, was Pharaoh. Alexander found the defeated Darius on the point of death and laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, concluding, "I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods, that I do these things truly and without fakery," to which Darius replied with a gentle rebuke, "Alexander, my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?"

Brethren, are we prepared to touch heaven as we fill our priesthood callings?

Recently, the author of a paper on teenage sexuality summed up his research by saying that he doesn't see any major reduction ahead in the sexual activity of teenagers, in part because society sends teens a mixed message: advertisements and the mass media convey "very heavy messages that sexual activity is acceptable and expected," inducements that sometimes drown out the warnings of experts and the pleas of parents. The Lord cuts through all the media messages with clear and precise language when He declares to us, "Be . . . clean" (3 Nephi 20:41).

Whenever temptation comes, remember the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who declared, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## 10. Sunday behavior

The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. Many activities are appropriate for the Sabbath. Bear in mind, however, that Sunday is not a holiday. Sunday is a holy day.

## 11. Spiritual help

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you received the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. He can help you make good choices. When challenged or tempted, you do not need to feel alone. Remember that prayer is the passport to spiritual power.

## 12. Repentance

If any has stumbled in his journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to

provide you and me that blessed gift. Though the path is difficult, the promise is real: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

These, then, are the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others.

### Greetings from President Benson

Our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson sends to you his greetings. He loves you. He trusts you. And how might you return that love, that trust?

*You have a heritage:* Honor it.

*You will meet sin:* Shun it.

*You have the truth:* Live it.

*You have a testimony:* Share it.

### A missionary's faith

Spiritual strength frequently comes through selfless service. Some years ago, I visited the California Mission, where I interviewed a young missionary from Georgia. I recall saying to him, "Do you send a letter home to your parents every week?"

He replied, "Yes, Brother Monson."

Then I asked, "Do you enjoy receiving letters from home?"

He didn't answer. At length, I inquired, "When was the last time you had a letter from home?"

With a quavering voice, he responded, "I've never had a letter from home. Father's just a deacon, and Mother's not a member of the Church. They pleaded with me not to come. They said that if I left on a mission they would not be writing to me. What shall I do?"

I offered a silent prayer to my Heavenly Father: "What shall I tell this young servant of Thine, who has sacri-

ficed everything to serve Thee?" And the inspiration came. I said, "Elder, you send a letter home to your mother and father every week of your mission. Tell them what you are doing. Tell them how much you love them, and then bear your testimony to them."

He asked, "Will they then write to me?"

I responded, "Then they will write to you."

We parted, and I went on my way. Months later I was attending a stake conference in Southern California when a young man came up to me and said, "Brother Monson, do you remember me? I'm the young missionary who had not received a letter from my mother or my father during my first nine months in the mission field. I'm the one to whom you said, 'Send a letter home every week, Elder, and your parents will write to you.'" Then he asked, "Do you remember that promise, Elder Monson?"

I remembered. I inquired, "Have you heard from your parents?"

He reached into his pocket and took out a sheaf of letters with an elastic band around them, took a letter from the top of the stack and said, "Have I heard from my parents! Listen to this letter from my mother: 'Son, we so much enjoy your letters. We're proud of you, our missionary. Guess what? Dad has been ordained a priest. He's preparing to baptize me. I'm meeting with the missionaries; and one year from now we want to come to California as you complete your mission, for we, with you, would like to become a *forever family* by entering the temple of the Lord.'" Then the young man put his hand in mine and asked, "Brother Monson, does Heavenly Father always answer prayers and fulfill Apostles' promises?"

I replied, "When one has faith as you have demonstrated, our Heavenly Father hears such prayers and answers in His own way."

Clean hands, a pure heart, and a willing mind had touched heaven. A blessing, heaven-sent, had answered the fervent prayer of a missionary's humble heart.

Brethren, it is my prayer that we may so live that we, too, may touch heaven and be similarly blessed. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast in the Tabernacle and also the Sunday morn-

ing session which follows must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We thank the combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Hosanna." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Now, brethren, if you'll bear with me for a few minutes I'd like to express some thoughts if I may be inspired by the Spirit. First let me say that I have appreciated all that has been said in this meeting. Much has been spoken to the young men. I endorse all of it. I hope that you have had impressed upon your minds the counsel you have heard. If you follow it, it will bless your lives, now and through all the years to come.

### **Counselors are important**

As we come to the conclusion of this meeting, I want to talk with you about a particular subject.

In a previous general priesthood meeting, I spoke about the duty of bishops. I discussed the entire field of their responsibilities. I suppose none of you have remembered that, but I recall doing so nevertheless.

Tonight, I think I should like to talk with you about counselors. There are twice as many counselors as there are bishops and presidents, and they are important.

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, has created in this church what we call presidencies. Essentially, all quorums and organizations are presided over by a presidency, except the Council of the Twelve Apostles, where there is one president of the Quorum, and

the Quorums of the Seventy, where there are seven presidents. I think I can understand why there is no presidency of the Twelve. The Council consists of twelve mature men, each of whom has comparable leadership responsibilities. The number is relatively small. Furthermore, the entire Twelve is a very close-knit body, with every man free to express himself on any matter that comes before the Quorum. Evidently, there is no need for a presidency of three to preside over the remaining nine brethren. All are seasoned by long experience. They are men who have been called with a special calling.

In the case of the Seventy, the number is large and flexible in terms of the number of quorums that might be organized. Each of the presidents, who is called from the First Quorum of Seventy, is coequal with the others, with one of the seven being denoted as the senior president.

In the case of the priests quorum, the bishop serves as president. But whether it be a bishopric, stake presidency, Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthood quorum presidency, mission presidency, temple presidency, auxiliary organization presidency, Area Presidency, or the First Presidency of the Church, there is a president with counselors.

## Experiences as a counselor

I think I know from personal experience something about serving as a counselor. I think I know something about his place and the parameters of his responsibility.

In the large ward in which I grew up, there were five quorums of deacons. Each was presided over by a presidency of three boys. My first responsibility in the Church, the first office I ever held, was counselor to the boy who presided over our deacons quorum. Our good bishop called me in and talked with me about this calling. I was tremendously impressed. I was worried and concerned. I was by nature, believe it or not, a rather shy and backward boy, and I think this call to serve as a counselor in a deacons quorum was of as much concern to me, in terms of my age and experience, as is my present responsibility in terms of my age and experience.

I subsequently served in the presidencies of other priesthood quorums. I served as a counselor in the stake Sunday School superintendency, as it was then called, before I became the stake superintendent. I served as a counselor in the stake presidency before I was named stake president. And, as all of you know, I have served as a counselor to two Presidents of the Church, two wonderful and dedicated and inspiring leaders.

## Selecting counselors

There are several cardinal principles with reference to counselors. In the first place, the presiding officer selects his own counselors. They are not chosen by others and forced upon him. However, it is necessary in most circumstances that his selections be approved by higher authority. For instance, in the organization of a stake, which occurs under direction of a General Authority, a president is carefully and prayerfully chosen. He is then asked to nominate men to serve as his counselors, and it is expected that the General Authority

will approve the selection before the men are interviewed.

It is imperative that the president himself select his counselors because theirs must be a compatible relationship. He must have absolute confidence in them. They must have confidence in him. They must work together in a spirit of mutual trust and respect. The counselors are not the president. In certain circumstances, they may act in his behalf, but this is a delegated authority. What, then, are some of the duties of a counselor?

## An assistant

He is *an assistant to his president*. Regardless of the organization, the assignment of president is a heavy and burdensome one. Even for the deacons quorum president, if he performs his duty well, there is much of responsibility, for he is accountable for the activity and well-being of the boys of his quorum.

As an assistant, the counselor is not the president. He does not assume responsibility and move out ahead of his president.

In presidency meetings, each counselor is free to speak his mind on all issues that come before the presidency. However, it is the prerogative of the president to make the decision, and it is the duty of the counselors to back him in that decision. His decision then becomes their decision, regardless of their previous ideas.

The president, if he is wise, will assign to these chosen assistants particular duties and then leave them free to perform, requiring from them accountability for what happens.

## A partner

*A counselor is a partner.* A presidency can be a wonderful relationship, a friendship where three brethren, working unitedly, have a close and satisfying fellowship. With delegation of responsibility, they move independently

only to a limited degree. All three, unitedly, have responsibility for the work of the ward, the quorum, the stake, the auxiliary organization, or whatever.

Such a partnership provides a safety valve. The wise writer of Proverbs tells us that "in . . . counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). When problems arise, when difficult decisions face us, it is wonderful to have those with whom we can talk with confidence and trust.

I recall that as a boy we had our presidency meetings. Our president would present whatever business was before him. We would talk about it. And then we would go forward, having had our discussion, to work to bring about the desired result.

No president in any organization in the Church is likely to go ahead without the assurance that his counselors feel good about the proposed program. A man or woman thinking alone, working alone, arriving at his or her own conclusions, can take action which might prove to be wrong. But when three kneel together in prayer, discuss every aspect of the problem which is before them, and under the impressions of the Spirit reach a united conclusion, then we may have the assurance that the decision is in harmony with the will of the Lord.

I can assure all members of this church that in the First Presidency we follow such a procedure. Even the President of the Church, who is prophet, seer, and revelator, and whose right and responsibility it is to make judgment and direct the course of the Church, invariably consults with his counselors to determine their feelings. If there is a lack of unity, there follows an absence of action. Two counselors, working with a president, preserve a wonderful system of checks and balances. They become a safeguard that is seldom, if ever, in error and affords great strength of leadership.

## A friend

*A counselor is a friend.* Presidencies should do more than counsel together. Occasionally, but not to excess, they and their spouses should socialize together. They should be good friends, trusted friends, in a very real sense. The counselors should be concerned for the health and well-being of their president. He should feel free to discuss with them his personal problems, if he has any, with the full assurance that they will hold in the strictest confidence all that is told them.

## A judge

*A counselor is a judge.* He is a lesser judge than the president, but he is nonetheless a judge.

In times of disciplinary councils, the three brethren of the bishopric, or the three brethren of the stake presidency, or the three brethren of the presidency of the Church, sit together, discuss matters together, pray together, in the process of reaching a decision. I wish to assure you, my brethren, that I think there is never a judgment rendered until after prayer has been had. Action against a member is too serious a matter to result from the judgment of men alone, and particularly of one man alone. There must be the guidance of the Spirit, earnestly sought for and then followed, if there is to be justice.

## A proxy

In some circumstances, *a counselor may serve as a proxy for his president.* The power of proxy must be granted by the president, and it must never be abused by the counselor. The work must go forward notwithstanding absences of the president for reasons of illness, employment, or other factors beyond his control. In these circumstances, and in the interest of the work, the president should give his counselors authority to act with full confidence, he having

trained them as they have served together as a bishopric or presidency.

It may not be easy to be a counselor. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., who, as a counselor, had responsibility for the operation of the Church while President Heber J. Grant was ill, said to me on one occasion, "It is difficult to have responsibility without authority."

He was saying, in effect, that he had to move forward in handling those duties which ordinarily devolve upon the President, but while doing so, he did not have the authority of the President.

### **Counselor to President Kimball**

I came to understand that situation in a very real way. If I may share with you some personal feelings: During the time that President Kimball was ill, President Tanner's health failed and he passed away. President Romney was called as First Counselor, and I as Second Counselor to President Kimball. Then President Romney became ill, thus leaving to me an almost overwhelming burden of responsibility. I counseled frequently with my Brethren of the Twelve, and I cannot say enough of appreciation to them for their understanding and for the wisdom of their judgment. In matters where there was a well-established policy, we moved forward. But no new policy was announced or implemented, and no significant practice was altered without sitting down with President Kimball and laying the matter before him and receiving his full consent and full approval.

In such circumstances when I would go to visit him, I always took a secretary who kept a detailed record of the conversation. I can assure you, my beloved brethren, that I never knowingly moved ahead of my file leader, that I never had any desire to move out ahead of him in Church policy or instruction. I knew that he was the appointed prophet of the Lord in that day. Even though I, too, had been sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator, along with my Brethren of the Twelve, I knew

also that none of us was the President of the Church. I knew that the Lord prolonged the life of President Kimball for purposes known to the Lord, and I had perfect faith that this prolonging of life was for a reason under the wisdom of Him who has greater wisdom than any man.

### **Counselors to President Benson**

In November 1985, President Kimball passed away, and President Ezra Taft Benson, then President of the Council of the Twelve, was unanimously sustained as the President of the Church and prophet, seer, and revelator. He chose his counselors, and I give you the assurance that we have worked together harmoniously and well, and it has been a great and wonderfully rewarding experience.

President Benson is now ninety-one years of age and does not have the strength or vitality he once possessed in abundance. Brother Monson and I, as his counselors, do as has been done before, and that is to move forward the work of the Church, while being very careful not to get ahead of the President nor to undertake any departure of any kind from long-established policy without his knowledge and full approval.

I am grateful for President Monson. We have known one another for a long time and have worked together in many responsibilities. We counsel together. We deliberate together. We pray together. We postpone action when we are not fully certain of our course and do not move forward until we have the blessing of our President and that assurance which comes from the Spirit of the Lord.

We pray for our President. We pray often and with great earnestness. We love him and know our proper relationship to him, as well as our responsibility to the entire church. We counsel with the Twelve and partake of their judgment, which is a greater resource than I am able to describe.

### Presidency called by the Lord

Do not fear, brethren: there is a Presidency over this church. I hope it will not sound egotistical when I say that it has been put in place by the Lord. We are not here of our own choosing. We are grateful for your sustaining support. We know that you pray for us and want you to know that we pray for you. We hope that we are following the will of the Lord. We earnestly believe that we are. We hope that you feel that we are. We have no other desire than the desire to do His will concerning His kingdom and His people.

We serve by His sufferance, knowing that at any time He chooses to do so, He can easily remove us. We are answerable to Him in this life, and will be held accountable when we are called before Him to make our report. I hope that we shall not be found wanting. I hope that when that time comes, I may have the opportunity of standing before

my Beloved Savior to give an accounting of my stewardship, and that I may be able to do so without embarrassment, or apology, or excuse. I have so tried to conduct my life. I know that I am not a perfect man, that I have many weaknesses. But I can say that I have tried to do that which the Lord would have me do as His servant, and as the servant of every member of this church throughout the world, and most particularly as the servant of my beloved President, our prophet, seer, and revelator.

I serve as a counselor, just as so many of you present tonight do, you in your responsibility and I in mine. I pray, my beloved brethren, that we may be faithful and true in these holy callings, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Hosanna."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons offered the benediction.

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## SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 7, 1990. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 160th semiannual con-

ference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, from the sessions of the conference due to recent surgery. He is viewing the sessions by television. We miss him deeply, and we express our love to him.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, Charles Didier, and Douglas J. Martin are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations that are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and

civic leaders, and other members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brothers Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" and will now sing "Turn Your Hearts," following which Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Turn Your Hearts."

Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

I'd like to first say that our hearts reach out to the family of former governor Scott Matheson, who died this morning, a man that many of us knew and greatly appreciated. We pray that the Spirit of the Lord will comfort those who grieve.

My beloved brethren and sisters, I greet you with love this beautiful Sabbath morning as we are assembled in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, and as you are gathered in thousands of other church buildings across the world, as well as in your homes. It is a beautiful autumn morning here in the valley of the mountains where almost a century and a half ago, after much suffering, our pioneer forefathers found a place where they could worship God according to the dictates of conscience. How grateful we are for the peace we enjoy. How precious is the privilege of worshiping our Eternal Father as we desire so to do, while respecting others as they worship according to their desire.

### The name of the Church

We meet in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. We meet as members of the Church which carries His sacred name.

Many of our people are disturbed by the practice of the media, and of many others, to disregard totally the

true name of the Church and to use the nickname *the Mormon Church*.

Six months ago in our conference Elder Russell M. Nelson delivered an excellent address on the correct name of the Church. He quoted the words of the Lord Himself:

"Thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (D&C 115:4).

He then went on to discourse on the various elements of that name. I commend to you a rereading of his talk.

*The Mormon Church*, of course, is a nickname. And nicknames have a way of becoming fixed. I think of the verse concerning a boy and his name:

Father calls me William,  
Sister calls me Will,  
Mother calls me Willie,  
But the fellers call me Bill.  
["Jest 'fore Christmas"]

### *Mormon means more good*

I suppose that regardless of our efforts, we may never convert the world to general use of the full and correct name of the Church. Because of the shortness of the word *Mormon* and the ease with which it is spoken and written, they will continue to call us the Mormons, the Mormon Church, and so forth.



They could do worse. More than fifty years ago, when I was a missionary in England, I said to one of my associates, "How can we get people, including our own members, to speak of the Church by its proper name?"

He replied, "You can't. The word *Mormon* is too deeply ingrained and too easy to say." He went on, "I've quit trying. While I'm thankful for the privilege of being a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of the Church which bears His name, I am not ashamed of the nickname *Mormon*."

"Look," he went on to say, "if there is any name that is totally honorable in its derivation, it is the name *Mormon*. And so, when someone asks me about it and what it means, I quietly say—'*Mormon* means *more good*.'" (The Prophet Joseph Smith first said this in 1843; see *Times and Seasons*, 4:194; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 299–300).

His statement intrigued me—*Mormon* means more good. I knew, of course, that *more good* was not a derivative of the word *Mormon*. I had studied both Latin and Greek, and I knew that English is derived in some measure from those two languages and that the words *more good* are not a cognate of the word *Mormon*. But his was a positive attitude based on an interesting perception. And, as we all know, our lives are guided in large measure by our perceptions. Ever since, when I have seen the word *Mormon* used in the media to describe us—in a newspaper or a magazine or book or whatever—there flashes into my mind his statement, which has become my motto: *Mormon* means more good.

### The prophet-leader Mormon

We may not be able to change the nickname, but we can make it shine with added luster.

After all, it is the name of a man who was a great prophet who struggled to save his nation, and also the name of a book which is a mighty testament of

eternal truth, a veritable witness of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I remind you for a moment of the greatness and of the goodness of this man Mormon. He lived on this American continent in the fourth century after Christ. When Mormon was a boy of ten, the historian of the people, whose name was Ammaron, described him as "a sober child, and . . . quick to observe" (Mormon 1:2). Ammaron gave him a charge that when he reached the age of twenty-four, he was to take custody of the records of the generations who had preceded him.

The years that followed Mormon's childhood were years of terrible bloodshed for his nation, the result of a long and vicious and terrible war between those who were called Nephites and those who were called Lamanites.

Mormon later became the leader of the armies of the Nephites and witnessed the carnage of his people, making it plain to them that their repeated defeats came because they forsook the Lord and He in turn abandoned them. His nation was destroyed with the slaughter of hundreds of thousands. He was one of only twenty-four who survived. As he looked upon the moldering remains of what once had been legions, he cried:

"O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!" (Mormon 6:17).

He wrote to our generation with words of warning and pleading, proclaiming with eloquence his testimony of the resurrected Christ. He warned of calamities to come if we should forsake the ways of the Lord as his own people had done.

Knowing that his own life would soon be brought to an end, as his enemies hunted the survivors, he pleaded for our generation to walk with faith, hope, and charity, declaring, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him" (Moroni 7:47).

Such was the goodness, the strength, the power, the faith, the prophetic heart of the prophet-leader Mormon.

### **The Book of Mormon changes lives**

He was the chief compiler of the book which is called after his name and which has come forth in this period of the world's history as a voice speaking from the dust in testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has touched for good the lives of millions who have prayerfully read it and pondered its language. May I tell you of one such I recently met in Europe.

He was a businessman, successful in his undertakings. In the course of his travels he met two of our missionaries. They tried to set up an appointment to teach him. He put them off but finally agreed to listen. He somewhat perfunctorily accepted what they had to say. He became convinced in his mind that they spoke the truth, but he was not moved in his heart.

He decided that he would read the Book of Mormon. He said that he had been a man of the world, never given to crying. But as he read the book, tears coursed his cheeks. It did something to him. He read it again and felt the same emotions. What had been conversion of the mind became conversion of the heart.

His way of life was altered, his perspective changed. He threw himself into the work of the Lord. Today he fills a high and holy calling in the cause he has come to love.

And so, while I sometimes regret that people do not call this church by its proper name, I am happy that the nickname they use is one of great honor made so by a remarkable man and a book which gives an unmatched testimony concerning the Redeemer of the world.

Anyone who comes to know the man Mormon through the reading and pondering of his words, anyone who

reads this precious trove of history which was assembled and preserved in large measure by him, will come to know that *Mormon* is not a word of disrepute, but that it represents the greatest good—that good which is of God. It was the modern translator of this ancient record who declared that through reading it a man would come closer to God than through the reading of any other book.

### **More good from the Word of Wisdom**

All of this places upon us of this church and this generation an incumbent and demanding responsibility to recognize that as we are spoken of as Mormons, we must so live that our example will enhance the perception that *Mormon* can mean in a very real way, more good.

In what way, you ask? There are many ways, but I have time to mention only three or four. When I think of the more obvious matters, I think of what we call the Word of Wisdom. This is a divine code of health received through revelation in 1833, 157 years ago. It proscribes alcohol and tobacco, tea and coffee, and emphasizes the use of fruit and grains. This Word of Wisdom came to us from the Father of us all, the God of heaven, for our blessing and the blessing of all who would observe it.

I regret that we as a people do not observe it more faithfully. But remarkable have been the blessings that have come of its observance to the degree that we have observed it. Newspapers across the nation have recently run reports on a significant California study. It was conducted by Dr. James Enstrom of the UCLA School of Public Medicine. It included a substantial number of active members of the Church—5,231 high priests and 4,613 of their wives. I quote now from a newspaper story:

"Compared to the other groups, the study found the Mormons had an average of 53 percent fewer fatal cancers . . . , 48 percent fewer deaths from

heart disease and 53 percent fewer fatal illnesses of all kinds (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 Sep. 1990, p. B1).

Dr. Enstrom, speaking of the eight-year study, said that he "can predict that a very active, health-conscious 25-year-old *Mormon* male will live 11 years longer than the average American male of the same age" (p. B1; italics added).

Can you doubt that the word *Mormon*, spoken in this context, means more good? It means, on average, a longer life. It means, on average, a life substantially more free of pain and misery. It means more happiness. It means more good.

Of course, some of our people suffer from these same diseases that afflict others. Some of them die young. But here are the scientific data, released to the world, of an independent study of eight years made by a faculty member of one of the great universities of the nation, a recognized expert in public health who knows whereof he speaks.

### More good in family life

As with personal and public health, so also *Mormon* should mean more good in terms of family life.

I recently read an illuminating article on the deterioration of the family in New York City, which is described as a root cause of the severe problems that plague that city and almost every other large city across the world.

The strength of any community lies in the strength of its families. The strength of any nation lies in the strength of its families. Strong family life comes of strong and clear religious understanding of who we are, and why we are here, and of what we may eternally become. Strong family life comes of the perception that each of us is a child of God, born with a divine birthright, and with a great and significant potential. Strong family life comes of parents who love and respect one another, and who love and respect and nurture their children in the ways of the Lord. These are undergirding prin-

ciples of our teachings as a church. To the degree that we observe these teachings we build strong families whose generations will strengthen the nation.

These are families where there is daily prayer with an acknowledgment of God as our Eternal Father and of our accountability to Him for what we do with our lives.

These are families where parents and children counsel together. These are families where education is encouraged and where children build upon the strengths of one another.

We are far from perfect in doing all that we ought to do, but, speaking collectively, we are trying, and we are achieving some measure of success.

To the degree that we accomplish these Church-fostered goals, *Mormon* means more good.

### More respect and charity

It also means more of tolerance and mutual respect and helpfulness. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith, speaking in Nauvoo in the year 1843:

"The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon'. I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves" (*History of the Church*, 5:498).

Last Sunday I attended a sacrament service in one of our university wards, a ward composed entirely of young married students who are struggling with their educational pursuits as well as with the burdens of family life. Two babies, recently born, were given blessings by their fathers as they were given names to be placed on the rolls of the Church.

I was touched by the prayers of both of these young fathers. One of them, speaking to his newborn son, blessed him that throughout his life he would have a spirit of love for all people regardless of their circumstances or condition. He blessed him that he should practice respect for others regardless of race, religious denomination, or other differences. I know that this young father, a medical student, has carried in his own life, as a faithful member of this church, love and appreciation and respect for all.

How great a thing is charity, whether it be expressed through the giving of one's substance, the lending of one's strength to lift the burdens of others, or as an expression of kindness and appreciation.

The people of this church, the people of this so-called Mormon Church, have given generously of their resources to help those in need. My mind goes back to one Sunday, a few years ago, when the Presidency of the Church asked that our people fast for two meals and consecrate the equivalent value, and more, to help the homeless and hungry in areas of Africa where we had no members, but where there was much of famine and suffering.

On Monday morning the money began to come in. There were hundreds of dollars, and then thousands of dollars, then hundreds of thousands of dollars, and then millions of dollars. These consecrated funds became the means of saving many who otherwise might have starved.

We do not boast of this. I simply mention it in furtherance of my theme that *Mormon* can and for many does mean more good.

The Relief Society of the Church, the Mormon Relief Society which embraces over two million women organized in more than a hundred nations, has as its motto Charity Never Filleth. Innumerable are the deeds of these remarkable and wonderful and unselfish women in succoring those in distress, in binding up the wounds of those who

have been hurt, in giving cheer and comfort to those in distress, in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and in lifting up those who have fallen and giving them strength and encouragement and the will to go forward.

This remarkable choir seated behind me is known across the world as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Everywhere that it has been heard—and those places are numerous—its song has been a hymn of peace, of love, of reverence, and of humanity, given in anthem of praise to the Almighty and His Beloved Son.

They of this choir are a part, a segment, of this remarkable thing which the world calls Mormonism and which we call the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Live worthy of the name *Mormon***

And so I leave with you the simple but profound thought: *Mormon* means more good.

The current issue of *Fortune* magazine, a highly respected business journal, carries a lead article naming Salt Lake City the number one city in America in which to do business. This is a great and singular compliment. Some feel it will help to attract many new people to the community. For us of the Church who reside here, this presents a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate through our attitudes, through our integrity, through our industry and neighborliness that we are the kind of people others appreciate.

May God grant us the strength and the discipline so to conduct our lives as to follow more nearly the matchless example of the Redeemer, of whom it was said, He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

I testify of His living reality. I testify of the reality of God, our Eternal Father. I testify of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this the dispensation of the fulness of times. I testify that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and that when people

speak of us by the name of this book, they will compliment us, if we will live worthy of the name, remembering that in a very real sense *Mormonism* must mean that greater good which the Lord Jesus Christ exemplified. I so pray in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" without announcement.

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### President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder David B. Haight, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker.

## Elder David B. Haight

### Importance of temples

Temples are the most sacred places of worship on earth where sacred ordinances are performed—ordinances which pertain to salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God. Each one is literally a house of the Lord—a place where He and His spirit may dwell, where He may come or send others to confer priesthood blessings and to give revelation to His people.

Temples built especially to the Lord have been erected in all ages. Moses built a tabernacle in the wilderness for the children of Israel. Solomon built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. The Nephites built sacred temples. Joseph Smith built houses of the Lord in Kirtland and Nauvoo, and succeeding prophets have built temples throughout the world. These have all been initiated and built under the direction and revelation of God.

Without revelation, temples can neither be built nor properly used. They are one of the evidences of the divinity of our Lord's true gospel. In our day, the Lord has said, "How shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name . . . that . . . ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from . . . the world" (D&C 124:37–38).

### Importance of our premortal life

Latter-day Saints should be eternally grateful for the revealed knowledge given anciently but reaffirmed in even greater plainness in our dispensation, and which was known by our Lord's Apostle, Peter, when he prophesied that before the second coming of Christ there would be a "restitution of all things" spoken of by God (see Acts 3:21; see also D&C 121:26–32). One of these restored doctrines, premortality or preexistence, should give us a greater appreciation for ourselves and the work assigned us, for each one of us existed as a spirit entity before we were born on this earth.

Most of us have wondered about what occurred in the premortal world and how it relates to our existence here. We should be acquainted with the truth that knowledge of the premortal life was restored that we might fulfill our responsibilities as children of God.

The Lord has revealed that a grand council was held in that preearth world where we exercised our agency regarding the plans presented. The major proposition in the accepted plan of salvation provided for an earth life where each person could work out his eternal salvation.

John A. Widtsoe provides insight to an earth-life responsibility made in that premortal world which is of great importance. He highlights a contractual agreement we made concerning the

eternal welfare of all of the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father:

"In our preexistent state, in the day of the great council, we made a[n] . . . agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan. . . . We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves but . . . saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father's work, and the Savior's work, but also our work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation."

Elder Widtsoe continues:

"That places us in a very responsible attitude towards the human race. By that doctrine, with the Lord at the head, we become saviors on Mount Zion, all committed to the great plan of offering salvation to the untold numbers of spirits. To do this is the Lord's self-imposed duty, this great labor his highest glory. Likewise, it is man's duty, self-imposed, his pleasure and joy, his labor, and ultimately his glory" ("The Worth of Souls," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, p. 189).

### Responsibility to redeem the dead

Latter-day Saints are a chosen people, so appointed in the premortal world, to be in partnership with the Lord for the salvation of the living and the dead. The First Presidency has announced that one of the major responsibilities of the Church, and therefore of its members, is to redeem the dead.

We learn by revelation from the Prophet Joseph Smith that "these . . . principles in relation to the dead and the living . . . cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation. . . .

"For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect" (D&C 128:15, 18; see also Hebrews 11:39-40).

It would be difficult for one to find stronger language on a requirement to receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

### The mission of Elijah

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John; however, it was necessary for the prophet Elijah to restore special keys, "in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness" (*History of the Church*, 4:211). Thus, the sealing powers and ordinances necessary for the dead as well as the living were to be restored. This was accomplished by Elijah's visit to Joseph and Oliver on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple.

Elijah's mission was to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6). The turning of the hearts of the fathers in the spirit world to the children on earth provides for the gathering of ancestral data of their deceased fathers in order that ordinances might be performed in the temples of the Lord. Thus, the living having their hearts turned to their fathers is in accordance with the premortal agreement we made before the earth was formed.

Elijah's visit to the Kirtland Temple is attested by several truths.

First, no one else has claimed that the prophecy regarding Elijah's coming in the last days has been fulfilled.

Second, the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery stands unassailable—they could not turn the hearts of the children to the fathers except by the power sent by God.

Third, neither did they have the power to persuade millions of people to turn their attention to their deceased fathers. Remarkable indeed is the fact that organized efforts to gather genea-

logical information began after Elijah came in 1836. In America, the New England Historical and Genealogical Society was organized in 1844, and the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society in 1869, for the purpose of gathering genealogy. What is known as the "Spirit of Elijah" has influenced non-members as well as members of the Church in this vital activity. The micro-filming of thousands of records is continuing on a large scale throughout the world. (See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 2:122-28).

The Jewish people have looked forward to the return to the earth of Elijah as promised by Malachi. Each year in the spring the Paschal feast is observed in many Jewish homes, at which time a door is opened so that Elijah might come in and sit at the feast.

"It was . . . on the third day of April, 1836," said President Joseph Fielding Smith, "that the [Jewish people], in their homes at the Paschal feast, opened their doors for Elijah to enter. [However,] on that very day Elijah did enter—not in the home of the Jews to partake of the Passover with them, but he appeared in the House of the Lord . . . in Kirtland, and there bestowed his keys" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1936, p. 75).

### Temple building

The Prophet Joseph said the main object of the "gathering [of] the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world . . . was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 307-8).

Bible prophecies indicate that in the last dispensation of the gospel, there would be a restoration of all

of the principles and practices of former dispensations, which includes temple building and the performing of ordinances therein (see Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2; Acts 3:19-21; Ephesians 1:9-10).

A latter-day Apostle wrote, "The history of Temples teaches us that the people of God have been strong, or weak, in proportion to the faithfulness with which they have attended to their sanctuaries" (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951], p. 612).

### Seven blessings of temple service

We would do well to follow the example of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. He and his sweet companion, Flora, have set aside time each Friday to regularly attend the house of the Lord, and they would join with me here this morning in declaring that members of the Church who absent themselves from temple attendance, where it is possible for them to attend, are denying themselves rich blessings.

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

"And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20-21).

"Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

"And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D&C 130:18-19).

With these two scriptures in mind, I exhort all members for a renewed commitment in strengthening their faith and progression to exaltation in the celestial kingdom—

*First, by fulfilling our responsibility to our dead.*

The Prophet Joseph said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us, is to seek after our dead" (*Times and Seasons*, 5:616).

I am indebted to my kindred dead who made it possible for me to live in this dispensation and to have the privilege of being a member of the "only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30).

Our opportunities are twofold: to do genealogical research and to perform temple work. There may be a time when we may not be able to do the research required, but this should not deter us from receiving the blessings of temple attendance. With forty-four functioning temples located in various parts of the world, the privilege of participating in temple activity is becoming more and more available. Should you or I neglect either of these responsibilities?

*Second, by being "endowed with power from on high" (D&C 38:32).*

The environment in the temple is intended to provide the worthy member of the Church with the power of enlightenment, of testimony, and of understanding. The temple endowment gives knowledge that, when acted upon, provides strength and conviction of truth.

*Third, by finding a place of refuge and peace (see D&C 124:36).*

The moment we step into the house of the Lord, the atmosphere changes from the worldly to the heavenly, where respite from the normal activities of life is found, and where peace of mind and spirit is received. It is a refuge from the ills of life and a protection from the temptations that are contrary to our spiritual well-being. We are told that "he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

*Fourth, by receiving revelation.*

John A. Widtsoe wrote: "I believe that the busy person on the farm, in the shop, in the office, or in the household, who has his worries and troubles, can solve his problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord than

anywhere else. If he will . . . [do] the temple work for himself and for his dead, he will confer a mighty blessing upon those who have gone before, and . . . a blessing will come to him, for at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to him, as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex his life. That is the gift that comes to those who enter the temple properly" ("Temple Worship," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, pp. 63-64).

Revelation also comes in receiving greater understanding of the endowment as one seeks to comprehend its meaning.

*Fifth, by giving genealogical and temple service.*

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation" (*History of the Church*, 4:426).

*Sixth, by becoming saviors on Mount Zion.*

The Prophet Joseph wrote: "But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, . . . and receiving all the ordinances, . . . ordinations and sealing powers upon their [own] heads, [and] in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah" (*History of the Church*, 6:184).

*And seventh, by qualifying to see and understand God in the house of the Lord.*

At Kirtland, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph:

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God" (D&C 97:15-16).

It is true that some have actually seen the Savior, but when one consults



the dictionary, he learns that there are many other meanings of the word *see*, such as coming to know Him, discerning Him, recognizing Him and His work, perceiving His importance, or coming to understand Him.

Such heavenly enlightenment and blessings are available to each of us.

God our Father lives, as does His Son, Jesus the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I am a grateful recipient of His healing power and love. This is His work. I so testify in His holy name, amen.

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The choir sang "Blessed Are the Men Who Fear Him" without announcement.

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### President Monson

We have just heard from Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Blessed Are the Men Who Fear Him."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "How Firm a Foundation," following which we shall hear from Elder James M. Paramore, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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## Elder James M. Paramore

My beloved brothers and sisters, I love you so much and I seek an interest in your faith and prayers today as I speak a few words to you. Several weeks ago I met a wonderful man while traveling to Texas. May I share with you a letter that I have written to him.

### Witnesses of the Lord

Dear Ken, I feel impressed to write you following our long discussion a few weeks ago on the airplane. I hope you have received my letters and the materials about the Church. I have thought of you so often and how anxious you were to learn all you could about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I felt I would like to share some thoughts today about the many witnesses of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and His mission to bless all mankind. Because He is the central figure of the life on this earth, every possible opportunity should be taken to understand Him, His purposes, and the witnesses that can bring us to Him. It seems that nothing could be more important to this

world and to each of us than to know that.

You know, Ken, each Christmas we sing a song with great feeling and gusto, "Joy to the world, the Lord [will] come; Let earth receive her King! Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, And Saints and angels sing" (*Hymns*, no. 201). These immortal, almost sacred words state that He will come. But, Ken, He *has* come. And it is about His coming—many times—and the witnesses thereof that I would like to write today.

God, our Father, has indeed established a plan for this earth and for all of us. Jesus Christ was central to that plan. Christ would come to earth, give of Himself to people every day, overcome the world, establish His ways for others to follow, and then take upon Himself the sins of the world in Gethsemane, and then be raised from the tomb to live again and tell us that we would live. He would give to the world hope and eternal perspectives. He would offer the way, the truth, and the light by which it could be done. His message would illuminate every human aspiration, every hope and desire.

No more could we cry out, Ken, "If only I could know who I am, what is my destiny, who is God, and why am I here." Many times He gave the answers in His life, in His teachings, and in the words left about Him. Thank our Heavenly Father above that there are many witnesses of Him in each era of time to which we can go and with perfect surety know of Him and His ways. All these witnesses certify of Him, and of the things He taught, and of the guidelines or standards—yes, the commandments—He gave that man could securely pass through this earth with joy and happiness and eternal blessings.

### Old Testament witnesses

As we open scriptural pages to read of the plan for life on earth, we see that our Father in Heaven made known to the prophets of the Old Testament that the Savior, His Only Begotten Son, would come to earth. Isaiah the prophet said that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14), and "the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6), and later said that "the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 40:28) was "the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 43:3), even the "redeemer . . . that maketh all things" (Isaiah 44:24; see Isaiah 40–45). Jeremiah, Zechariah, Job, Moses, and others of the prophets had revealed to them the Christ and that He would come to provide the way for all of us to return to our Father in Heaven. These prophets left their witnesses for us to study and to pray about and to receive our own testimony of the "looked for" Savior of the Old Testament.

### New Testament witnesses

My friend, the world waited for the Savior, not knowing fully what He would do. And then came that long-awaited day when He came to the earth as the babe in Bethlehem. Miraculous events surrounded His birth, and acknowledgment was given from heaven

that this indeed was the Only Begotten Son of God sent to earth to redeem all mankind from death.

While here on the earth those short years, He fulfilled His ministry, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); and by acknowledging that He was sent to do the work of His Father in Heaven, and fulfilling all righteousness—He would Himself be baptized by one whom He acknowledged to be a prophet, even John the Baptist. He gave a special power, the gift of the Holy Ghost, to all who would follow Him and be baptized, which would, He said, be a Comforter, would guide to all truth, would teach all things, would bring all things to our remembrance, would show us all things to come, and would be a witness, and testify of Him (see John 14–16).

He also called Apostles and prophets and others and gave them authority to act in His name. He established His church to serve as a refuge from the world, where the Saints could learn about Him and His truths and His ways and could learn to love and serve each other.

One stands in awe in reading and feeling the profound effect of His teachings and life. He raised the dead and made the blind see. He fed thousands on several occasions from just a few loaves of bread and some fishes. He forgave the repentant sinner, gave hope and encouragement, and administered to others all the days of His life. And then He offered Himself, though in the greatest agony and pain ever known to mankind, upon the cross as a final witness of His love for you and me by taking our sins upon Himself, a pure and sinless Son of God, that we might have eternal life. He did something for us that we could not do for ourselves. But think of the great blessing that came a few days later when the tomb was open and He emerged as the living, resurrected, immortal Christ, showing us that He lives and that we, too, would live.

So, again, the witnesses. The record in the New Testament reveals His life and the many witnesses of Him. It did again provide the commandments, or guides or standards, and ordinances by which mankind could be blessed eternally.

### Book of Mormon witnesses

Ken, when Jesus was in Palestine, He said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). And following His resurrection, He visited some of the other sheep on the American continent and again established and provided the witnesses as He had done in Palestine.

When He came among them, He said, "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:11). "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets [including those who lived on the American continent] testified shall come into the world" (11:10).

He established the Church among them. He gave the priesthood and the ordinances of baptism and again the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who would follow Him. He gave prophets and disciples to direct His church and people. He blessed the people, and many miracles followed His work.

My friend, His few days among this people are recorded in the Book of Mormon to help us gain the witness for ourselves. The people in ancient America were so touched and changed by the teachings and power of the Savior that they lived His teachings for over two hundred years. This stands as an everlasting witness of the power of the Savior to cause people to live in peace and unity and receive His blessings. Listen to a recorded account of a very special witness, the Book of Mormon:

"And it came to pass . . . , the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, . . . and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man

did deal justly one with another. . . .

" . . . They did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord. . . .

" . . . And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:2, 12, 16).

"[And all of this] because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people" (1:15).

### Latter-day witnesses

My friend, what powerful witnesses Jesus gave those few short years upon the earth. But, unfortunately, man would ultimately change His truths, His church, and lose sight of His promises. And so, in the year 1820, Jesus would again cross the veil that separates earth life and life hereafter in response to a fervent desire and prayer of a young man, Joseph Smith, Jr., and provide the witnesses again.

Joseph read in the New Testament, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, . . . and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Joseph then, in sincere faith in this promise of the Lord, went and poured his soul out to God. And the heavens opened, and two heavenly beings descended and stood in the air above him.

And Joseph said, "I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). And so the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the young man and ushered in the witnesses that would bring us back to the knowledge once again.

Ken, the heavens were opened, not just for Joseph Smith, Jr., but for the whole world. This would usher in again all that He had established while He was upon the earth.

So, once again witnesses were given, as during the *Old Testament days*

and during the *life of the Savior* upon the earth and *as He appeared to the inhabitants of the American continent* after His resurrection. He always provides witnesses of the truths and blessings He brings.

Finally, Ken, we have in our day, as before, the witnesses of the members of the Church, who follow, know, and testify of these eternal truths through the power of the Holy Ghost.

### **The most important news**

My friend, many years ago, about the turn of the century, a writer for a newspaper was asked an important question, "What would be the most important news the world could receive?" He thought and thought about the question, he talked to many people, and read all he could in an effort to find an answer for himself. And finally, he printed his answer, "To know that Jesus Christ lives today would be the most important news the world could receive. In fact, if He lives today, then we too will live eternally as He said."

Ken, no, God has not forgotten His children, even though they leave His

presence for a season and come to earth. We are all on a journey to come to earth and prove ourselves, to find the Savior and the witnesses we have talked about today, and to embrace them with all of our heart. This will bring us peace and safety in a world of ever more frightening challenges and will ultimately make us witnesses ourselves of Him and His work and take us home one day to our Father in Heaven crowned with glory and eternal lives. Ken, won't you take that journey? I bear to you my solemn testimony that it is true. There are witnesses—the New and Old Testaments. There are Apostles and prophets upon this earth today. His church is upon this earth today, and I do so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder James M. Paramore, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **The straight and narrow way**

While traveling along a mountainous road one evening through a driving rainstorm punctuated with frequent claps of thunder and flashes of lightning, Sister Wirthlin and I could barely see the road, either in front of us or to the right and the left. I watched the white lines on that road more intently than ever before. Staying within the lines kept us from going onto the shoulder and into the deep canyon on one side and helped us avoid a head-on collision on the other. To wander over either line could have been very dangerous. Then I thought, "Would a right-thinking person deviate to the left or the right of a traffic lane if he knew

the result would be fatal? If he valued his mortal life, certainly he would stay between these lines."

That experience traveling on this mountain road is so like life. If we stay within the lines that God has marked, he will protect us, and we can arrive safely at our destination.

The Savior taught this principle when he said,

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13–14).

In modern-day revelation he taught further, "For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it" (D&C 132:22).

King Josiah was a king of Judah who reigned in righteousness. When he was only eight years old, he succeeded his father as king. Scripture tells us that although he was just a boy, Josiah "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, . . . and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings 22:2).

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round" (D&C 3:2).

### Getting sidetracked

Even though these teachings of the Savior are plain and direct, we are still at risk of getting sidetracked. Some people choose to follow the teachings of the Lord and of his living prophet only when convenient, but reject them when sacrifice or deeper commitment is required. Some fail to follow only because his divine teachings do not agree with their own preconceived notions.

We get sidetracked by submitting to temptations that divert us past the bounds of safety. Satan knows our weaknesses. He puts attractive snares on our paths at just those moments when we are most vulnerable. His intent is to lead us from the way that returns us to our Heavenly Father. Sin may result from activities that begin innocently or that are perfectly legitimate in moderation, but in excess they can cause us to veer from the straight and narrow path to our destruction.

One example is sports. Many of us enjoy going to ball games and watching them on television. I am no exception. I love to watch a good athletic contest. If we spend excessive time with sporting

events, however, we may neglect things that are much more important.

Good physical and spiritual health can help us to stay on the straight and narrow way. The Lord gave his code of health in the Word of Wisdom, a "principle with promise" that modern medical science continues to substantiate (D&C 89:3). All of God's commandments, including the Word of Wisdom, are spiritual (see D&C 29:34-35). We need to nourish ourselves spiritually even more than physically. Are we giving adequate emphasis to our spiritual health?

Another activity that can detract us from the proper way is watching television excessively or viewing improper movies. While fine productions on these media are uplifting and entertaining, we need to be very selective in choosing what we see and how much of our time such an activity deserves. Our precious time must not be diverted to the sideline attractions of vulgar language, immoral conduct, pornography, and violence.

### Material possessions

Another temptation to detour us is placing improper emphasis on the obtaining of material possessions. For example, we may build a beautiful, spacious home that is far larger than we need. We may spend far too much to decorate, furnish, and landscape it. And even if we are blessed enough to afford such luxury, we may be misdirecting resources that could be better used to build the kingdom of God or to feed and clothe our needy brothers and sisters.

Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, warned us, "Do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy" (2 Nephi 9:51). And in even stronger words, he said:

"Because some of you have obtained more abundantly than . . . your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and

high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

"And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you. . . .

"Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other" (Jacob 2:13-14, 21).

Pride and vanity, the opposites of humility, can destroy our spiritual health as surely as a debilitating disease can destroy our physical health.

The Savior taught clearly the proper value of worldly possessions in his conversation with the rich young ruler who asked what more was required to have eternal life; he had kept all the commandments from his youth. He asked the Master what he still lacked. Jesus told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor, and come and follow Him. But the man went away sorrowing, for he loved his possessions (see Matthew 19:16-22). How many of us would pass this test?

Many of us have made sacred covenants to live the laws of sacrifice and consecration. But when the Lord blesses us with riches and affluence, we may give little thought to how we should use these blessings to help build up his church.

The scriptures are full of warnings against worldliness and pride because they, too, can lead us off course. The Lord explained to the Prophet Joseph Smith that many people veer from the path "because their hearts are set so much [on] the things of this world" (D&C 121:35).

### Moral integrity

My brothers and sisters, I plead with you also to be certain that you do not cross over the lines of safety into the paths of immorality. Our living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, said from

this pulpit: "The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality. . . . It permeates our society" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 4; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 4). The broken hearts and broken families that come to my attention likewise demonstrate that immorality is, indeed, a very serious problem in the world and even among some Church members. Remember, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). "You cannot do wrong and feel right" (Ezra Taft Benson, "To 'the Rising Generation,'" *New Era*, June 1986, p. 5).

The first deviation toward moral breakdown in a man or woman is similar to a spark that ignites a devastating forest fire. On a hot, windy summer day this year in Midway, Utah, embers from a small campground fire were fanned into a raging forest fire that soon swept over the entire mountainside. Before the flames were brought under control, the lives of two outstanding members of the Church were lost. The roaring fire had destroyed the beautiful autumn foliage, plus eighteen homes. We risk similar damage to our moral integrity when we let our guard down for even one brief moment. The spark of an evil thought can enter our mind and could ignite and destroy the moral fiber of our soul.

### Learn and apply the word of God

How can we keep ourselves on the straight and narrow way? The Lord gave the answer over and over again. We must learn the word of God by studying the scriptures and apply his word by praying daily to the Lord and serving our fellowmen.

In the Book of Mormon, the word of God is referred to as an iron rod. In interpreting his father's dream for his brothers, Nephi wrote:

"And they said unto me: What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?

"And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would

hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:23–24).

In other words, Nephi taught that by clinging to the word of God, as though it be a handrail, we would be able to avoid temptations and not lose our way in darkness. Thus, we would remain on the narrow path.

Using another apt symbol, the Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

God's word, then, is the light for our path, the iron rod or railing to which we can cling. It provides the limiting lines that we must not cross if we are to reach our destination.

Through daily study of the scriptures and the words of the modern-day prophets, we can keep our values in line with the will of our Heavenly Father. The scriptures lead us "to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25).

Daily prayers can help us keep on the path that leads to eternal life. In Proverbs we read, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). Daily prayer in private and as families will help us stay close to our Heavenly Father and help us know what is of most value to us and to him. We are very unlikely to stray if we offer a humble, simple prayer at least each morning and evening to express thanks and to seek divine guidance.

### **Serve others**

The Savior taught the value of service to our fellowmen in the parable of the sheep and the goats when he said to the righteous:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34–40).

King Benjamin taught the same principle, saying, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

### **Enjoy the fruits of the gospel**

As you pray, occasionally take a personal inventory to see how you measure up in your righteousness, in meeting the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We each can know for ourselves, as the Lord knows, where we need to improve. We must hold to the standards. If we have advanced in material, outward things, how are we doing inwardly? Are our lives acceptable to the Lord? Are we willing to acknowledge our sins and then make the effort to forsake them, repent, and make the course correction that will return us to the straight and narrow path?

I know that each of us has much to do. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the tasks we face. But if we keep our priorities in order, we can accomplish all that we should. We can endure to the end regardless of temptations, problems, and challenges. Those who remain faithful will receive God's greatest blessing, eternal life, and the privi-

lege of living with our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son in the celestial kingdom.

Elder Marion G. Romney said, "When earth life is over and things appear in their true perspective, we shall more clearly see . . . that the fruits of the gospel are the only objectives worthy of life's full efforts" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1949, p. 39).

The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob declared: "O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 9:41).

I pray that we may all enjoy the fruits of the gospel. Let us be faithful and true to our covenants. Let us each be mindful of the straight and narrow way and do all we can to stay within the straight lines in the midst of the storms and temptations of life. Let us study the scriptures, hold to the rod of the word of God, be prayerful in all we do, and perform Christlike acts of service. May we be filled with charity, the pure love of Christ, and may that love be

reflected in our actions. We then will observe the "weightier matters" of God's law while not leaving the rest undone (Matthew 23:23).

I bear solemn testimony that Jesus is the Holy One of Israel, our Savior, and our Redeemer. This is his church. He is the Son of God, our Heavenly Father. Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Restoration in these latter days, and President Ezra Taft Benson is a living prophet today. I bear this testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Sing Praise to Him" without announcement.

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### President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Twelve, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Sing Praise to Him."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "We Have Partaken of Thy Love." The benediction will then be offered by Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Historic changes in eastern Europe

As the year 1990 moves inexorably toward its close, all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can pause and reflect on the momentous happenings that have occurred in our time, in our day, and in our lives.

In the month of May, my wife and I were in the historic city of Berlin. We boarded a taxi and asked that the driver take us to the Berlin Wall. When the driver failed to respond to the direction provided, again the desired destination was given. Still no movement. Then he turned toward us and, in halting

English, explained, "I can't. The wall is *kaput*—gone!" We drove to the Brandenburg Gate. We viewed its restoration. We gazed from West Berlin to East Berlin, now one Berlin, and reflected on the events which followed the wall's demise: a new mission of the Church established in Poland, another in Hungary, yet another in Greece, and a mission reestablished in Czechoslovakia. And now, official recognition of our Leningrad Branch in the Soviet Union. Who, except the Lord Himself, could have foreseen these historic events? It was He who declared, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached



in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14). Surely the purposes of the Lord continue to unfold to our view if we but have eyes that truly see and hearts that know and feel.

### **The Toronto Ontario Temple**

Another transcendent blessing came the last weekend of August when a magnificent temple of the Lord was dedicated in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. In its gleaming glory, the temple seems to beckon to each who views its splendor, "Come! Come to the house of the Lord. Here is found 'rest for the weary and peace for the soul.'"

And how the people did come! First they thronged to the public open house, where reverently and quietly they viewed the interior of the temple and learned the purpose for its erection and of the blessings which the temple can provide. One visitor described the temple's beauty with the words, "This is a center of serenity."

As she was about to leave the temple, a young Asian girl said, "Mommy, this is beautiful here. I don't want to go."

One woman surprised an usher with her request: "I have been so impressed with what I have seen. How do I join your church?"

Then came the faithful membership of the Church to the dedicatory sessions. From Ontario and Quebec they came. Others traveled from those cities in the United States which are a part of the temple district. Some journeyed to Toronto from the distant Maritime Provinces of Canada. None who came returned home disappointed.

A boy of tender years viewing the cornerstone-laying ceremony was, by the spirit of inspiration, called to take trowel in hand and assist in the sealing of the cornerstone.

Dora Valencia, who had lain four years in the Ajax Ontario Hospital, mustered her courage and fulfilled the desire to attend. From her hospital bed,

which was wheeled into the celestial room, she not only basked in the spirit found there, but she also helped to provide that spirit. As I walked past her, upon leaving the room, and gazed at her expression of profound gratitude to the Lord, I bent low and took her hand in mine. Heaven was very near.

Angelic choirs lifted spirits heavenward as they sang the beautiful "Hosanna Anthem." When the congregation joined with the choir to sing "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning," no eye remained dry and no heart untouched.

Speakers recounted the history of the Church in the Toronto area, and the beautiful dedicatory prayer given at each session whispered peace. The words of Oliver Cowdery, spoken of another time, seemed to capture the spirit of the dedication: "These were days never to be forgotten" (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

### **The Church in eastern Canada**

As we recount the history of the Church in eastern Canada, we come to appreciate the tender feelings of the members of the Church on having a temple in their midst.

As early as April 1830, Phineas Young received a copy of the Book of Mormon from Samuel Smith, brother of the Prophet, and a few months later traveled to upper Canada. At Kingston, he gave the first known testimony of the restored Church beyond the borders of the United States.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, with Sidney Rigdon and Freeman Nickerson, was in Brantford and Mt. Pleasant, Ontario, in 1833. Joseph and Sidney had long been absent from their families and felt great concern about them. In the revelation we now know as the 100th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord counseled:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my friends Sidney and Joseph, your families are well; they are in mine hands. . . .

"Therefore, follow me, and listen to the counsel which I shall give unto you.

"Behold, . . . I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened . . . in this eastern land" (D&C 100:1-3).

Toward the people, the Prophet evidenced the same kind feelings that the Lord had shown to him and Sidney Rigdon. Of them he makes entries in his journal, such as, "The people were very tender and inquiring," and again, "O God, seal our testimony to their hearts" (*History of the Church*, 1:422-23).

In 1836 Parley P. Pratt went to Canada following a great prophecy uttered by Heber C. Kimball in which Brother Pratt was instructed to go to Toronto. He was told that he would there find people waiting for him who would receive the gospel, and that from there the gospel would spread into England, where a great work would be done. In Toronto he found President John Taylor, the Fieldings, and many others.

In August of the next year, 1837, the Prophet Joseph Smith, with Sidney Rigdon and Thomas B. Marsh, then President of the Twelve Apostles, visited Toronto. Riding in a carriage and holding evening meetings by candlelight, they visited the churches. Elder Taylor accompanied them. He said: "This was as great a treat to me as I ever enjoyed. I had daily opportunities of conversing with them, of listening to their instructions, and in participating in the rich stores of intelligence that flowed continually from the Prophet Joseph."

Recounting this history brings to my mind the experience of John E. Page as the Prophet Joseph Smith called him to serve a mission in Canada. "But I can't go on a mission to Canada, Brother Joseph," protested John E. Page. "I don't even have a coat to wear."

"Here," said Joseph Smith, removing his own coat, "take this, and the Lord will bless you."

John E. Page left Kirtland, Ohio, May 31, 1836, on his first mission as an

elder of the Church. He labored in Canada for two years. During that time, he traveled over five thousand miles, mostly on foot, and baptized some six hundred people.

### The Archibald Gardner family

One of the great families to join the Church in Canada was that of Archibald Gardner. From his journal, we learn of the family's experience in Canada during the year 1843.

Robert Gardner describes the day of their baptism: "We went about a mile and a half into the woods to find a suitable stream. We cut a hole through ice eighteen inches thick. My brother William baptized me. . . . I was confirmed while sitting on a log beside the stream. . . .

"I cannot describe my feelings at the time and for a long time afterwards. I felt like a little child and was very careful of what I thought or said or did lest I might offend my Father in Heaven. Reading the Scriptures and secret prayer occupied my leisure time. I kept a pocket Testament constantly with me. When something on a page impressed me supporting Mormonism, I turned down a corner. Soon I could hardly find a desired passage. I had nearly all the pages turned down. I had no trouble believing the Book of Mormon. Everytime I took the book to read I had a burning testimony in my bosom of its truthfulness."

Archibald Gardner added: "[My] mother . . . [accepted] the Gospel at once and whole heartedly, after hearing it. . . . Not long after contacting the new faith she became desperately ill, so ill that her life was despaired of. She insisted on being baptized. The neighbors said that if we put her in the water they would have us tried for murder as she would surely die. Nevertheless, well bundled up, and tucked into a sleigh, we drove her two miles to the place appointed. Here a hole was cut in the ice and she was baptized in the presence of a crowd of doubters who had come to witness her demise. She was taken

home. Her bed was prepared but she said, 'No, I do not need to go to bed. I am quite well.' And she was" (in Delilah G. Hughes, *The Life of Archibald Gardner: Utah Pioneer of 1847* [Draper, Utah: Review and Preview Publishers, 1970], pp. 25-27).

Down through the years, this same spirit of faith and confidence in the Lord has continued. During the period 1959 to 1962, my family and I lived in Toronto, where I served as the mission president. We are witnesses to the love God has for the Saints in that area. May I describe some of these "never to be forgotten" events?

### Donald Mabey

One situation featured the Donald Mabey family. Brother Mabey had moved his family from Salt Lake City to North Bay, Ontario, because of a business transfer by his company. Don was an elder in the Church but had been less than fully active in priesthood callings. He was about thirty-five years of age at the time and had a lovely family. The North Bay Branch was a struggling unit desperately in need of priesthood leadership. When I attended that branch and recognized this fact, I held an interview with Brother Mabey and said to him, "I am calling you to serve in the presidency of the North Bay Branch."

He replied, "I can't do it."

I asked, "Why?"

He answered, "I have never done it before."

"That's no hindrance," I responded. I took fresh hope from Don's name, *Mabey*, and the words of a once-popular ballad, "Please don't say no—say maybe."

Brother Mabey said yes. Today he is a high priest living here in the West. All of his family members have entered temple doors and have received temple blessings.

### A chapel for the St. Thomas branch

Another evidence of faith took place when I first visited the St. Thomas

Branch of the mission, situated about 120 miles from Toronto. My wife and I had been invited to attend the branch sacrament meeting and to speak to the members there. As we drove along a fashionable street, we saw many church buildings and wondered which one was ours. None was. We located the address which had been provided and discovered it to be a decrepit lodge hall. Our branch met in the basement of the lodge hall and was composed of perhaps twenty-five members, twelve of whom were in attendance. The same individuals conducted the meeting, blessed and passed the sacrament, offered the prayers, and sang the songs.

At the conclusion of the services, the branch president, Irving Wilson, asked if he could meet with me. At this meeting, he handed to me a copy of the *Improvement Era*, forerunner of today's *Ensign*. Pointing to a picture of one of our new chapels in Australia, President Wilson declared, "This is the building we need here in St. Thomas."

I smiled and responded, "When we have enough members here to justify and to pay for such a building, I am sure we will have one." At that time, the local members were required to raise 30 percent of the cost of the site and the building, in addition to the payment of tithing and other offerings.

He countered, "Our children are growing to maturity. We need that building, and we need it now!"

I provided encouragement for them to grow in numbers by their personal efforts to fellowship and teach. The outcome is a classic example of faith, coupled with effort and crowned with testimony.

President Wilson requested six additional missionaries to be assigned to St. Thomas. When this was accomplished, he called the missionaries to a meeting in the back room of his small jewelry store, where they knelt in prayer. He then asked one elder to hand to him the yellow-page telephone directory, which was on a nearby table. President Wilson took the book in hand and

observed, "If we are ever to have our dream building in St. Thomas, we will need a Latter-day Saint to design it. Since we do not have a member who is an architect, we will simply have to convert one." With his finger moving down the column of listed architects, he paused at one name and said, "This is the one we will invite to my home to hear the message of the Restoration."

President Wilson followed the same procedure with regard to plumbers, electricians, and craftsmen of every description. Nor did he neglect other professions, feeling a desire for a well-balanced branch. The individuals were invited to his home to meet the missionaries, the truth was taught, testimonies were borne, and conversion resulted. Those newly baptized then repeated the procedure themselves, inviting others to listen, week after week and month after month.

The St. Thomas Branch experienced marvelous growth. Within 2½ years, a site was obtained, a beautiful building was constructed, and an inspired dream became a living reality. That branch is now a thriving ward in a stake of Zion.

When I reflect on the town of St. Thomas, I dwell not on the ward's hundreds of members and many dozens of families; rather, in memory I return to that sparse sacrament meeting in the lodge-hall basement and the Lord's promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Temples like the Toronto Temple are built with stone, glass, wood, and metal. But they are also a product of faith and an example of sacrifice. The funds to build temples come from all tithe payers and consist of the widow's mite, children's pennies, and workmen's dollars—all sanctified by faith.

### **Gustav and Margarete Wacker**

Whenever I attend a temple dedication, I think of Brother and Sister

Gustav and Margarete Wacker of Kingston, Ontario. He was once the branch president of the Kingston Branch. He was from the old country. He spoke English with a thick accent. He never owned or drove a car. He plied the trade of a barber. He made but little money cutting hair near an army base at Kingston. How he loved the missionaries! The highlight of his day would be when he had the privilege to cut the hair of a missionary. Never would there be a charge. When they would make a feeble attempt to pay him, he would say, "Oh, no; it is a joy to cut the hair of a servant of the Lord." Indeed, he would reach deep into his pockets and give the missionaries all of his tips for the day. If it were raining, as it often does in Kingston, President Wacker would call a taxi and send the missionaries to their apartment by cab, while he, himself, at day's end would lock the small shop and walk home—alone in the driving rain.

I first met Gustav Wacker when I noticed that his tithing was far in excess of that expected from his potential income. My efforts to explain to him that the Lord required no more than a tenth fell on attentive but unconvinced ears. He simply responded that he loved to pay all he could to the Lord. It amounted to about a third of his income. His dear wife felt exactly as he did. Their unique manner of tithing payment continued.

Gustav and Margarete Wacker established a home that was a heaven. They were not blessed with children but mothered and fathered their many Church visitors. A sophisticated and learned Church leader from Ottawa told me, "I like to visit the Wacker home. I come away refreshed in spirit and determined to ever live close to the Lord."

Did our Heavenly Father honor such abiding faith? The branch prospered. The membership outgrew the rented Slovakian Hall where they met and moved into a modern and lovely chapel of their own to which the branch

members had contributed their share and more, that it might grace the city of Kingston. President and Sister Wacker had their prayers answered by serving a proselyting mission to their native Germany and later a temple mission to that beautiful temple in Washington, D.C. Then, in 1983, his mission in mortality concluded, Gustav Wacker peacefully passed away while being held in the loving arms of his eternal companion, dressed in his white temple suit, there in the Washington Temple.

### Homeward to heaven

All of this history and much more crowded my mind during the dedication services of the Toronto Temple. I reflected on the many nationalities represented by our members there. English, Scottish, German, French, and Italian predominated, but there were also members from Greece, Hungary, Finland, Holland, Estonia, and Poland. Surely, Toronto is an example of the promise of the Lord found in Jeremiah: "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (3:14). This He has done; and from this Zion called Toronto, the word now goes

forth in these native tongues to the home nations of those He has gathered.

When I prepared to leave Toronto following the concluding dedicatory session, I gazed upward toward heaven, that I might offer a silent prayer of gratitude to God for His watchful care, His bounteous blessings, and for "days never to be forgotten." High above the gleaming white temple, which personifies purity and reflects righteousness, is the gold-leafed statue of the Angel Moroni. I remembered being told that from that height of 105 feet, on a clear day one can see all the way to Cumorah. I noted that in Moroni's hand was his familiar trumpet. He was gazing homeward—homeward to Cumorah. The beautiful Toronto Temple prepares all who enter to return homeward—homeward to heaven, homeward to family, homeward to God.

That all of us may travel safely to our eternal home is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We Have Partaken of Thy Love."

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick offered the benediction.

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## SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 7, 1990. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst and Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the

160th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To those in the adjacent Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Marvin J. Ashton, Robert E. Wells, and L. Aldin Porter are seated on the stand.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by John Longhurst and Robert Cundick, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service

by singing "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah." The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Enzio Busche of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah."

Elder F. Enzio Busche offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Be Not Afraid," following which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "Be Not Afraid."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

"Be not afraid." Thank you, choir, for that extra support.

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

"But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples" (D&C 97:15-17).

### The attitude of reverence

I want to speak to you today about reverence. While I believe that reverence is often exhibited through reverent behaviors, it is not behaviors that concern me now. I want to discuss reverence as an attitude—an attitude of deepest respect and veneration toward Deity. Of course, reverent behaviors follow reverent attitudes, but it is the attitude of reverence that we need to cultivate first among our members. Reverent behaviors without reverent attitudes are empty of meaning because they are performed for the praises of men, not God.

The scriptures remind us constantly of the goodness that is centered in the heart. Those who put on an appearance only to receive the honors

of men, but have unclean hearts, are called hypocrites. It is not enough to behave reverently; we must feel in our hearts reverence for our Heavenly Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Reverence flows from our admiration and respect for Deity. Those who are truly reverent are those who have paid the price to know the glory of the Father and His Son. As Paul admonished in Hebrews, "Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (12:28).

### The conversion of Alma the Younger

The story of Alma the Younger provides a wonderful illustration of the reverence we feel in our hearts when we come to know God. As a young man, he had chosen to be sinful and worldly. Alma was so astonished when an angel appeared to him and called him to repentance that he became dumb and so weak he could not move. After two days and two nights, when Alma's limbs received their strength, he stood up and began to speak unto the people about how he had been redeemed of the Lord. Alma was born again. He was a new creature. His heart had changed.

In verse twenty-nine of the twenty-seventh chapter of Mosiah, Alma describes his marvelous transformation. He declares: "My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and

bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more."

Then in the thirty-first verse, we see evidence of Alma's deep reverence for God: "Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye."

Alma's experience had enabled him to understand the glory of God and also "godly fear." He held the deepest respect and veneration for God because he had seen Him seated upon His heavenly throne, in all His power and majesty.

### Reverence in area conferences

Several years ago, I had the opportunity of traveling with the President of the Church to attend a series of area conferences. I will never forget the contrast between two conferences that were held just a few days apart. The first area conference was held in a large arena, and as we sat on the stand, we noticed continuous movement by the people. We saw individuals throughout the arena leaning over and whispering to family members and friends seated next to them. Giving the members the benefit of the doubt, we attributed the general lack of reverence to the nature of the facility.

A few days later, we were in another country attending another area conference in an arena much like the first. When we entered the arena, however, an immediate hush came over the congregation. As we sat through the two-hour general session, there was very little movement among the people. Everyone listened intently. Great atten-

tion and respect was shown all the speakers, and when the prophet spoke, you could hear a pin drop.

After the meeting was over, I asked the priesthood leaders about what they had done to prepare the people for the conference. They told me their preparation had been simple. They had asked priesthood holders to explain to the members of their families, and also the families they home taught, that at an area conference they would have the privilege of hearing the words of the prophet and the Apostles. The priesthood leaders explained that the reverence their people felt for God and His servants was the basis for their reverent behavior at the conference.

### A bishop teaches reverence

I remember as a young child being taught a valuable lesson by my bishop. President Heber J. Grant had just visited our community to dedicate our new chapel. Our bishop was so impressed with the dedicatory prayer that the next Tuesday when we held Primary he attended with us. He wanted to teach us to have respect for the building which had just been dedicated as a place of worship.

The bishop took us on a tour of our new chapel and showed us the various features of the building to impress upon us that it was now a house dedicated to the Lord. First, he pointed to the back of the hall where the beehive emblem had been painted above the back exit doors. He explained that the beehive was the emblem of industry for the early pioneers. "The bees are ever busy bringing honey and sweetness into the hive," he said. The beehive painted on our wall was to be a reminder of the importance of being industrious each day and gathering the good things of this world and bringing them with us to be shared as we worshiped in our Sunday services.

Then he pointed to the large painting in the front of the hall depicting the arrival of the pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley. He spoke to us about the

sacrifices the pioneers had made for us by coming here and building our cities and our first houses of worship, so we could partake of the Spirit of the Lord and be instructed in His ways.

The bishop directed our attention to two other paintings, one on each side of the large painting of the pioneers. The painting on the right was of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the one on the left was of the prophet Brigham Young. He spent time telling us about the reverence we should have for the prophets and that we should heed their words of counsel. He then reminded us of President Grant's trip and described some of the sacrifices he had made to come and dedicate and turn over this building to the care and keeping of the Lord.

The bishop next explained the motif that ran around the entire chapel. It was of the egg and the dart repeated over and over again. He discussed why this motif was selected—the egg signified new life, the dart signified the end of life. The egg was a reminder of our mortal birth and the time we have to be taught and trained in the ways of the Lord, to be obedient to His will, and to partake of the sacred ordinances which would qualify us to return to His presence. The dart represented the time of transition from mortality to immortality. He reminded us that if we proved ourselves worthy, we would be blessed with the greatest gift of God, the gift of eternal life.

Finally, for special emphasis, the bishop focused our attention on the sacrament table. He instructed us about the purpose of the sacrament as a time to renew our baptismal covenants and to remember the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. He concluded with an appeal to each of us to always be reverent in this house, which had been dedicated to the Lord.

Witnessing the dedication of our chapel by a prophet of God and attending the tour guided by my bishop impressed me greatly. I realized that every time I entered the chapel I was entering a holy place. It was not difficult for me

to be reverent at church because all around me there were reminders of the Lord, His servants, and His eternal plan for me. These reminders reinforced my reverent attitude, and reverent behavior followed.

Of course, our chapels are not all constructed with the same design features. However, each one centers on the mission of our Savior. They are buildings dedicated for the purpose of worshipping Him. Now, the bishops of the Church today may not be able to instruct the Primary as my bishop was able to do for us because our chapels are usually occupied during the time Primary is in session in this day and age. But perhaps the parents of the Church could increase the reverent attitudes of their children by finding a time to be alone with them in the chapel and explaining to them that this is a special place, dedicated to the Lord, wherein only reverent attitudes and behavior are acceptable to Him.

### **Teach reverence in the home**

If reverence is an attitude toward Deity, then it is a private feeling. It is something we feel inside our hearts no matter what is going on around us. It is also a personal responsibility. We cannot blame others for disturbing our reverent attitudes.

Where, then, does the development of reverent attitudes begin? The home is the key to reverent attitudes, as it is to every other godlike virtue. It is during personal and family prayer that the little ones learn how to bow their heads, fold their arms, and close their eyes while our Father in Heaven is being addressed. It is a mother taking time to be certain that during each day there is a quiet period where the hustle and bustle of daily activities are divorced from the house, where just parents and children have time together in quiet solitude for reflection and teaching, to set the example of having reverence in the home.

It is during family home evenings, which are a part of our home life, where



children are taught that there are special times, not only in church but also at home, when we learn of our Heavenly Father and when everyone needs to be on his best behavior. Behavior learned at home determines behavior in church meetings. A child who has learned to pray at home understands that he must be quiet and still during prayers in worship services.

### **Serve God reverently**

One Sunday, my granddaughter Diana, who is four years old, was sitting next to her father at church. Diana sat reverently, enjoying the comfort of her father's arm holding her close to him. However, when the bishop stood up and announced the sacrament hymn, Diana gently lifted her father's arm from off her shoulder and placed it in his lap. Then she sat up straight and folded her arms. She looked over at her father and encouraged him to do the same.

Diana's message to her father was perfectly clear. She was telling him to turn his complete and total attention to

the Savior. This is the message a reverent attitude always conveys, and when reverent attitudes abound, reverent behavior will always flourish. I pray that, like Diana, we may all strive to develop reverent attitudes so that we may serve God reverently and with godly fear (see Hebrews 12:28).

Let us never depreciate the value of our own personal example of being a living witness of the love and respect we have for Him whom we call "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (2 Nephi 19:6), is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the Seventy.

## **Elder Russell M. Nelson**

### **Choices**

Not long ago a beautiful young mother asked me for guidance with a very difficult decision she was facing. It pertained to an important surgical operation that was being considered. Consequences of her choice would affect her husband and her family as well. She said, "Decisions are really hard for me. I even have trouble choosing what to wear each morning."

"You are not so different," I replied. "Each of us must make choices. That is one of life's great privileges."

I told this lovely mother that my fellow physicians are regularly asked questions about the human body. Some questions relate to surgical intervention to save a life or to save a part of the body. Other questions relate to elective procedures to alter the body's structure

or function. In recent years, many questions relate to the "choice" to abort the life of a newly forming human being. Ironically, such "choice" would deny that developing individual both life and choice.

I reminded her that questions regarding our bodies represent only an important fraction of life's most challenging choices. Others include Where shall I live? What shall I do with my life? To which cause should I commit my effort and my good name? These are but a few of the many choices that we must make each day.

I will not disclose the name of the sister, nor the specific operation she was contemplating. To do so might divert our attention to a specific topic and away from those fundamental principles that pertain to important decisions generally.

Because challenging choices face all of us from time to time, I invite others to join with us as I extend my conversation with this young mother.

I would suggest three questions you might ask yourself as you consider your options. Whether they are once-in-a-lifetime or routine daily decisions, serious reflection on these three questions will help clarify your thinking. You might wish to review these questions first alone and then with your husband. They are:

1. *Who am I?*
2. *Why am I here?*
3. *Where am I going?*

Truthful answers to these three questions will remind you of important anchors and unchanging principles.

As you consider these fundamental questions, it will become clear that decisions you first thought to be purely personal virtually always impact the lives of others. In answering these questions, then, you must be mindful of the broader circle of family and friends who will be affected by the consequences of your choice. This self-evaluation will be a silent examination. No one else will hear your replies. Though I will suggest some answers, the ultimate responses must be uniquely yours.

### Who am I?

Remember, you are a daughter of God, just as your husband is a son of God. Our Heavenly Father loves you. He has created you to be successful and to have joy.

"He created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness" (D&C 20:18; see also Genesis 1:26–27; Mosiah 7:27; Alma 18:34; 22:12; Ether 3:15; Moses 2:27).

These bodies, created in God's image, are to be preserved, protected, and well cared for. I feel as did the Apostle Paul, who likened the human body to a temple:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

You are one of God's noble and great spirits, held in reserve to come to earth at this time (see D&C 86:8–11). In your premortal life you were appointed to help prepare the world for the great gathering of souls that will precede the Lord's second coming. You are one of a covenant people. You are an heir to the promise that all the earth will be blessed by the seed of Abraham and that God's covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled through his lineage in these latter days (see 1 Nephi 15:18; 3 Nephi 20:25).

As a member of the Church, you have made sacred covenants with the Lord. You have taken upon yourself the name of Christ (see D&C 18:28; 20:29, 37). You have promised to always remember Him and to keep His commandments. In return, He has agreed to grant His Spirit to be with you (see Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77).

Having briefly considered some answers to question number one, let us turn our attention to question number two.

### Why am I here?

This question is one I have often asked myself. Well do I remember doing so many years ago while in military service, separated from family and friends, surrounded by the horrible devastation of war. On another unforgettable occasion, I was stranded in a cold, remote area, far from transportation, food, or shelter. No doubt you have had similar anxious moments. But those experiences are the exceptions. I'd like to discuss the greater question.

Why are you here on planet earth?

One of the most important reasons is to receive a mortal body. Another is to be tested—to experience mortality—to determine what you will do with life's challenging opportunities. Those opportunities require you to make

choices, and choices depend on agency. A major reason for your mortal existence, therefore, is to test how you will exercise your agency (see 2 Nephi 2:15, 25).

Agency is a divine gift to you. You are free to choose what you will be and what you will do. And you are not without help. Counsel with your parents is a privilege at any age. Prayer provides communication with your Heavenly Father and invites the promptings of personal revelation. And in certain circumstances, consultation with professional advisers and with your local leaders in the Church may be highly advisable, especially when very difficult decisions must be made.

That is precisely the pattern chosen by President Spencer W. Kimball. In 1972, Elder Kimball, then a member of the Council of the Twelve, knew that his mortal life was slipping away because of heart disease. He obtained competent medical counsel and prayerfully consulted with the Lord and with his file leaders in the Church. Elder and Sister Kimball and the First Presidency carefully weighed available alternatives. Then President Harold B. Lee, speaking for the First Presidency, counseled Elder Kimball. With great conviction, President Lee said: "Spencer, you have been called! You are not to die! You must do everything you need to do to care for yourself and continue to live" ("Spencer W. Kimball: Man of Faith," *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, p. 40).

President Kimball chose to have an operation performed upon his heart that was known to carry a high risk. He was blessed with a successful result. He lived thirteen more years, eventually to succeed President Lee as President of the Church.

That precious privilege of choice—man's agency—was decreed before the world was created (see D&C 93:29–31). It is a moral agency (see D&C 101:78). Thus, it was opposed by Satan (see Moses 4:3) but affirmed by the Lord (see Moses 4:2) and reaffirmed through prophets in ancient and in modern

times (see D&C 58:26–28; Moses 6:56; 7:32).

The proper exercise of moral agency requires faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). Because of Him, you have your agency. He must be the very foundation of your faith, and the testing of that faith is a fundamental reason for your freedom to choose.

You are free to develop and exercise faith in God and in His divine Son, faith in His word, faith in His church, faith in His servants, and faith in His commandments.

Facing difficult challenges is neither new nor unique. Centuries ago, Joshua spoke of a choice his family faced. He declared,

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15; see also Moses 6:33).

Cultivation of that faith will entitle you to the companionship of the Holy Ghost, who will help you make wise decisions (see 2 Nephi 2:27–28; D&C 14:8).

Many may profess a measure of faith in God, but without sincere repentance, faith cannot be fully operative. This concept was made known to the Nephites:

"Many of them . . . are brought to the knowledge of the truth, . . . and are led to believe the holy scriptures, . . . which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them" (Helaman 15:7).

Faith, repentance, and obedience will qualify you for sublime gifts of justice and mercy, which are bestowed upon those worthy of the blessings of the Atonement (see Alma 34:16–17).

Yes, every test, every trial, every challenge and hardship you endure is an opportunity to further develop your faith (see D&C 63:11; 101:4).

Faith can be fortified through prayer. Prayer is the powerful key to making decisions, not only concerning

your physical body, but concerning all other important aspects of your life. Humbly seek the Lord in prayer with a sincere heart and real intent, and He will help you (see Alma 33:23; Moroni 7:9, 10:4; D&C 9:7-9).

Remember that faith and prayer alone are seldom sufficient. Personal effort is usually necessary to accomplish your heart's desire. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17; see also 2:18, 20, 26; Alma 26:22).

The answers to question number two emphasize that you are here to exercise faith, to pray, and to work hard.

Now let's turn our attention to question number three.

### Where am I going?

This question reminds us that eventually you (and I) are going to die, be resurrected, be judged, and be awarded a place in eternal realms (see 1 Corinthians 15:22; Alma 12:24; 21:9; Helaman 14:16-17; D&C 138:19). With each passing sunset, you are closer to that inevitable day of judgment. Then you will be asked to account for your faith, your hopes, and your works. The Lord said,

"Every man may act in doctrine and principle . . . according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment" (D&C 101:78; see also Mosiah 3:24).

As all will be resurrected, your physical body will then be restored to its proper and perfect frame (see Alma 11:43; 40:23). The day of your resurrection will be a day of judgment that will determine the kind of life you shall have hereafter.

That judgment will consider not only your actions, but also your innermost intent and heartfelt desires. Your everyday thoughts have not been lost. Scriptures speak of the "bright recollection" (Alma 11:43) and "perfect remembrance" (Alma 5:18) that your mind will provide in times of divine judgment.

The Lord knows the desires of our hearts. At the time of judgment, surely the special yearnings of single sisters and childless couples, for example, will be given compassionate consideration by Him who said,

"I, the Lord, will judge all . . . according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9; see also Hebrews 4:12; Alma 18:32; D&C 6:16; 33:1; 88:109).

He will know of your longings as a wife and mother who tried diligently to serve your family and society properly.

As I listen to those who argue for causes contrary to the commandments of God and observe individuals who revel in the pleasures of the world with apparent disregard for eventual judgment, I think of this divine description of their folly:

"They despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, . . . for their heart went after their idols" (Ezekiel 20:16).

Interviews, as for temple recommends, with your bishop and members of your stake presidency are precious experiences. And, in a way, they could be considered meaningful "dress rehearsals" for that grand colloquy when you will stand before the Great Judge.

After the Resurrection and Judgment, you will be assigned to your everlasting home on high. The revelations liken the glory of those dwelling places to the differing lights of heavenly bodies. Paul said,

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (1 Corinthians 15:41).

The Lord revealed more to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who wrote of the *teststial* glory, where those will ultimately abide "who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus" while in this life (D&C 76:82).

The Prophet taught of the *terrestrial* glory as the abode for the "honorable . . . of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men," who rejected

the gospel while on the earth (D&C 76:75).

And then he wrote of the *celestial* glory, which "glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all" (D&C 76:70). There the faithful will dwell together with their families, enjoying exaltation with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. With them will be those who have been obedient to ordinances and covenants made in holy temples, where they were sealed to predecessors and posterity.

As you continue to face many challenging choices in life, remember, there is great protection when you know who you are, why you are here, and where you are going. Let your unique identity shape each decision you make on the path toward your eternal destiny. Accountability for your choices now will bear on all that lies ahead.

May each of us choose wisely and with faith in Him who created us, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Hartman Rector, Jr.

### The Resurrection

Brothers and sisters, I would like to visit with you for a few moments this afternoon about the Resurrection and the importance of going home to our Heavenly Father in a clean condition. Surely there is not much known by the living about the Resurrection because neither prophets nor resurrected persons have explained the process to mortals. Only this much: that the atonement of Jesus Christ "bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 42:23), death being the separation of the spirit from the body.

The Resurrection has to do with the restoration of the spirit to the body and the body to the spirit. In the words of Alma, "Yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23). And why is this done? Again in the words of Alma, "The resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice" (Alma 42:23).

Jacob gives us some idea of what resurrection will be like:

"O how great the plan of our God! For . . . the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the right-

eous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

"Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness. . . .

"And assuredly, as the Lord liveth, for the Lord God hath spoken it, . . . they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy are the devil and his angels" (2 Nephi 9:13–14, 16).

### Repentance

It seems, then, there is good news and bad news about the Resurrection. The good news is that everyone will be resurrected. All will live again! And all who have been righteous (have repented) will still be righteous. The bad news is that he that is filthy (which means the devil and those who have chosen to associate with him) shall be filthy still. Others will receive a lesser glory than the celestial because they have not repented while in the flesh.

Therefore, in the Resurrection men will be judged. Judgment tells how well we have kept the commandments in the flesh (see Alma 5:15).

Then, looking forward to what condition we will be in when we are resurrected, probably the most important commandment is, in the words of the Father, "Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son" and then endure to the end (2 Nephi 31:11; see also 31:15).

In fact, the Master has indicated we should say nothing but repentance to this generation (see D&C 6:9; 11:9; 14:8; 19:21). Repentance seems to be the most important experience we can have on this earth to prepare for the Resurrection, because "none but the truly penitent are saved" (Alma 42:24).

So the question of questions is, What makes people repent? As near as I have been able to determine, once a person has sufficient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that he believes Christ has paid for his sins, then he will repent. And it seems that very few, if any, will repent until they believe this truth. Therefore, it is vital to teach the truth about Jesus Christ as the literal son of God and our Lord and Savior and Redeemer in order to bring souls to repentance. Faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance *is* the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Alma 34:16).

## Baptism

When we experience repentance, we are permitted to make a sacred covenant with God in the waters of baptism. Baptism is for the remission of sins (see D&C 13:1; 68:27), and further, it is a witness before God the Father that we will be obedient unto Him hereafter in keeping His commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:6-7).

Once baptized, we then receive the Holy Ghost, a special gift from God, which is priceless beyond expression. The Holy Ghost bears witness of the Father and the Son and guides us to all

truth and comforts us and gives us peace for the rest of our lives. The Holy Ghost is received by the laying on of hands of an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the same time we are received into the Church and become "born again"—sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see John 1:12; Ether 3:14; Alma 5:49).

## Enduring to the end

According to the Father, all that is required thereafter is that we endure to the end (see 2 Nephi 31:15), which means that we will hereafter—

1. Continue to repent (see Moses 5:8).
  2. Continue to forgive others (see D&C 64:9-10) for the rest of our lives.
- Perhaps there is one other thing we must do:
3. We must be nice!

## The nicest things we can do

I do not believe there will be anyone in the celestial kingdom that is not nice (see D&C 31:9; 52:40).

"To be nice" means much more than just to be good. For instance, probably the nicest thing that parents can do for their children is to give them birth under the temple covenant or to be sealed to them thereafter. There is probably nothing of greater value than this. Why? Because it guarantees to the children eternal life—if *they* remain faithful. And this is true irrespective of what happens to the parents.

The nicest thing that children can do for their parents is to be obedient unto them (see Colossians 3:20). The nicest gift a father can give to his children is to love their mother and be true to her. Conversely, the nicest gift that a mother can give her children is to love their father and be true to him. Why is this such a nice gift? Well, basically, it assures the children that they will never have to choose between their parents.

The nicest gift that you can give to nonmember friends or acquaintances is to share the gospel with them. This is probably most easily done by having a copy of the Book of Mormon delivered to them by the missionaries. Why the Book of Mormon? Because it is, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "the most correct . . . book on earth" (*History of the Church*, 4:461). Why is the Book of Mormon so great? Probably because the "plain and precious" truths that were lost or taken from the Bible were put back or restored in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 13:40). In my opinion, a man can learn more about Jesus Christ by reading the Book of Mormon than any other book.

The nicest thing we can do for less-active members of the Church is to reach out to them with love and tenderness and kindness and bring them back into activity in the Church so that they can go to the temple, which they must do to prepare for a glorious resurrection.

The nicest thing we can do for the poor is, in the words of King Benjamin, to "impart of [our] substance to [them], every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants" (Mosiah 4:26).

### Keeping the commandments

When the Lord invites us to return unto Him (see Malachi 3:7), He means, in essence, that we repent and return to His commandments, for they are calculated to make us happy and prepare us for the Resurrection.

Well! Which commandments do we have to keep? After baptism, let's start with the Ten Commandments and add the Word of Wisdom and the law of tithing.

Well, what is so important about the Word of Wisdom? If we do not live the Word of Wisdom, we run the risk of killing ourselves. And that's contrary

to the sixth commandment. Here is a statement I took from a package of cigarettes, one of the most popular brands in America: "Surgeon General's Warning: Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema and may complicate pregnancy." Sounds like it might kill us, doesn't it?

What is so important about tithing? If you don't pay tithing, you are stealing from the Lord (see Malachi 3:8), and that's contrary to the eighth commandment, and no one has ever prospered doing that. On the other hand, when we pay our tithes and offerings, the Lord gives it all back to us "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38). How is that for a promise?

The Ten Commandments are eternal laws that *have not* changed from Sinai until now. They are timeless, eternal laws that will never change.

Keeping the Ten Commandments plus paying tithes and keeping the Word of Wisdom after baptism is the standard or guide to continue to repent or, in the words of Nephi, to "feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3). Therefore, if you are not paying tithing, repent and start paying it. If you are not living the Word of Wisdom, repent and start living it. If you are not morally clean, repent and become clean.

Repentance means to confess and forsake sins (see D&C 58:43) and partake of the sacrament, where we renew our baptismal covenant. Then we are clean because we have a Savior who has paid for our sins, but only on condition of our repentance (see D&C 18:12).

If you are not keeping the Sabbath day holy, repent and start doing it. If you are not truthful, repent and start telling the truth. If you are not honoring your parents, repent and start honoring your parents. If you are worshiping false gods—such as football, baseball, golf, tennis, or money or technology or automobiles or houses or gold or silver—and you can tell what a man worships by what he does on Sunday—repent and start worshipping the true and living

God, the maker of heaven and earth and all things that in them are.

### The gospel is easy to live

Brothers and sisters, the gospel is easy to live. All we have to do is stay everlastingly at it.

We are here upon the earth to learn how to be happy eternally as we prepare for a glorious resurrection, because man is that he might have joy (see 2 Nephi 2:25), and we receive our blessings from Him whom we list to obey (see Alma 3:27; D&C 29:45).

Isn't it just smart to follow the Lord? In fact, there is no other way, for the Lord God hath spoken it, and He never doth vary from that which He hath said (see Mosiah 2:22).

My brothers and sisters, I am a witness before God that He lives and hears and answers prayers. I bear witness that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to pay the price for sin, which He did, and to break the bands of death, which He also did. I know that it is only through Him that we live and move and have our being, that His is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved or *made clean* (see 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; Acts 4:12). I know that this church, The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, is the only true church on earth, with which the Lord is well pleased—speaking collectively and not individually. These things I don't just believe—I know them. I also bear record that Ezra Taft Benson is a living, breathing prophet of God.

If I have done anything or said anything that has offended anyone within hearing today, I am truly sorry and I humbly beg your forgiveness, for surely the central truth of the gospel is “none but the truly penitent are saved” (Alma 42:24), to which I bear witness and express to you my love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has addressed us, followed by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing “Praise to the Man,” following which Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the Primary General Presidency, will speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang “Praise to the Man.”

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## Sister Ruth B. Wright

### Pictures of Book of Mormon events

On the walls of our Primary office hang pictures, drawn by children from around the world, which illustrate some of the great events from the Book of Mormon. As I look at them, I feel the spirit of noble prophets and leaders who made choices to be obedient to the Lord in spite of earthly trials. The examples of their faith, courage, love, humility, service, and endurance sustain me and give me strength to face challenges in my own life.

So that you might also gain strength from their messages, let me describe some of these plain and simple pictures and share some insights about the powerful principles they teach. The stories are familiar, yet the precepts we learn from them may be different each time we read them. The scriptures have the power to speak to our particular situations wherever we are in life. The insights you gain may be entirely different from the ones that I gain, but they all can strengthen us personally.



### Lehi's journey

The first picture is Lehi's journey. With complete faith that the Lord would guide him day by day, Lehi turned from the security and comfort of his home in Jerusalem and began his journey in the wilderness facing an unknown future.

When the unknown looms ahead of me, I gain strength by remembering Lehi and exercising faith that the Lord will guide me.

### Nephi building a ship

As I look at Nephi building a ship, I can imagine what might have gone through his mind. "How can I do that? I don't know anything about building a ship. I haven't had any training!" Instead, he faced his challenge with courage. He said:

"If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.

"And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship?" (1 Nephi 17:50-51).

So Nephi built a ship.

When tasks seem too great or even impossible, I think of courageous Nephi by the water's edge building a ship.

### King Benjamin's address

I love to look at the picture of King Benjamin standing on the mighty tower with his loving arms outstretched to all his people. This beloved king, who spent his life in service to others, showed great humility when he willingly admitted his weaknesses and shortcomings and yet stated with conviction that he recognized his calling was from God.

"I have not commanded you to come . . . that ye should fear me, or that

ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man.

"But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind . . . , and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people . . . to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me" (Mosiah 2:10-11).

When I feel inadequate and overwhelmed with my own weaknesses, I think of King Benjamin and try again.

### Alma and Amulek in prison

Picture Alma and Amulek sitting side by side bound with cords in prison. Wicked men persecuted them, imprisoned them, and allowed them to suffer great afflictions because they were testifying of the truth. We know that God's children, since time began, have suffered for righteousness' sake and will continue to be tried. I gain strength from reading about Alma and Amulek as I endeavor to meet my individual trials.

### Helaman's stripling warriors

In a day of ever-changing values in which some say, If it doesn't hurt anyone, do what you want, or If it feels good, do it, or It's only cheating when you get caught, I think about Helaman's stripling warriors. These young men, who were taught correct principles by their mothers, "were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted" (Alma 53:20).

Now, that means being true when you are tempted, being true when you don't want to be, being true when it means standing alone from the rest of the world. Remembering the example of these faithful young men strengthens me in my effort to be steadfast in obeying gospel principles.

## Christ ministering to the Nephites

As I look at the picture of Christ appearing to the Nephites, I remember a dear friend who had a series of traumatic events happen to her in a short period of time. She was physically weakened, emotionally distraught, and spiritually drained. Every day seemed harder for her to face than the day before. She was desperate for comfort. While lying in a hospital bed anticipating an unwanted but necessary surgery, she felt utterly alone. Her thoughts turned to Joseph Smith and his sufferings in Liberty Jail. Then she thought about our Savior, Jesus Christ. She asked her husband to read to her from 3 Nephi. The Nephites had gathered at the temple in the land Bountiful and twice heard a voice they didn't understand that seemed to come from heaven.

"It being a small voice . . . did pierce them . . . to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn. . . .

"And behold, the third time they did understand the voice. . . .

"Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

"They saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe. . . .

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

"And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:3, 6–8, 10–11).

After my friend listened to this passage, a sweet peace enveloped her. For the first time in months she felt relief. Her fears were calmed. She gained strength to carry on.

Not only did Christ minister to the multitude; he also gave strength to the children. In the seventeenth chapter of 3 Nephi, Jesus asked that the little ones be brought to him, and he gathered them around him.

"He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. . . .

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:21, 23–24).

When I read this passage, I am filled to overflowing with the love Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father have for me and you and the whole world. He blesses us daily, as he blessed the little children, with a love that gives me strength to go forth with assurance that he will guide me.

My dear brothers and sisters, I testify that by prayerfully reading and pondering the Book of Mormon, each of us can gain strength to meet our daily challenges. I know the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Every time I read from its pages I receive a confirmation of its truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Ruth B. Wright of the Primary General Presidency, who has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Helio R. Camargo and Waldo P. Call, who were released yesterday from the Second Quorum of the Seventy after serving faithfully for more than five years as General Authorities. These brethren have now been called to serve as the presidents of the São Paulo and Mexico City temples respectively.

## Elder Helio R. Camargo

### In all things give thanks

Brothers, sisters, and friends, as the Apostle Paul counseled the Thessalonian Saints, "In every thing give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18), today I would like to express my gratitude for some of the special blessings in my life.

I am very grateful to have been born and reared in a Christian family, where from the earliest years of my life I had the privilege of coming to know and appreciate the sacred scriptures of the Bible.

I am grateful to have been taught the principles of honesty, hard work, and thrift even more by the daily example of my parents and relatives than by their words and counsel.

In those now distant past days of my adolescence, I chose to pursue a career in the military. In the academy I was taught by my leaders and professors in the principles of discipline, obedience, and dedication. For that experience, my soul is also filled with gratitude.

When I was still young, at the time it occurred, I considered the unfortunate accident that prevented my continuing a military career to be a terrible impediment to the realization of my fondest dreams. However, today, at this point in my life when my brown hair has been substituted for white and now even threatens to abandon me entirely, I have come to recognize that accident as a blessing in disguise, destined to propel my life in other paths that have led to higher levels of understanding and self-realization. I am also grateful for this.

I am grateful as I contemplate the years that have passed and the happenings that have unfolded, measuring what the Lord has given me and considering the sure promises for a happier future—a future made even happier by the company of relatives and friends who have preceded me in passing to the other side of the veil, and thinking of

those loved ones with whom I still enjoy living every day—particularly the extraordinary woman that God allowed me to have as a wife in mortality and throughout eternity. Also, I am grateful for the wonderful children and grandchildren he sent to our home to be the joy of our life. As I contemplate all these blessings, gratitude is the predominant feeling that comes to my heart.

Because of these and many other blessings that I cannot describe adequately, when I received the invitation to speak during this conference, gratitude was the primary theme that first came to my mind.

I express appreciation to those who preserved the Bible for future generations, beginning with the faithful patriarchs of Israel and then passed on by those dedicated scholars who translated the prophets' writings into Greek—the universal language of the time—and thus preserved for us that precious version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Later, there were the steadfast individuals who tirelessly worked to copy the scriptures during the Middle Ages and who patiently reproduced and defended them from the barbarians who invaded Europe. I also pay honor and praise to the courageous reformers of the sixteenth century who translated the scriptures into the language of the people and made them available for the general reading and edification of all the children of God.

I express appreciation to our Father in Heaven for Joseph Smith, that humble and faithful prophet through whom were revealed to this generation the spiritual experiences and the precious doctrinal teachings of the prophets who lived in this hemisphere and recorded their testimony of Jesus Christ in the scriptures which are today known as the Book of Mormon—the book that casts so much light on the obscure passages of the Bible, confirming the word of God and filling in that marvelous portion of the plan of salva-

tion created by our Father in Heaven for the happiness of his children.

I also express appreciation for the good families—descendants of the pioneers who populated these desert valleys, rearing noble children, pure and dedicated, ready to accept mission calls and willing to leave their homes and go into the world sharing the precious truths of the restored gospel with unknown and sometimes hostile people. I express a special thanks to those whose children were called to our native land of Brazil and for all they did for the people generally and for my family particularly.

I am grateful to the Almighty for the privilege given to all of us to be born in this generation of immense challenges and bright hopes, of technological progress and magnificent scientific accomplishments. I am also thankful for being born in a free nation where the gospel message can be freely preached for the eternal happiness of all who will receive it.

I express gratitude for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—perfect in organization, incomparable in spiritual power, and unassailable in doctrine and practice. I am grateful that in the restored gospel, the truths of the universe are incorporated in such a way that all who embrace them are never forced to abandon any previously known truth, nor any comforting hope, nor any ennobling principle possessed before. To the contrary, these truths of the restored gospel only cause the light already had to shine with greater brilliance—any happiness and joy already experienced to be magnified, and inspired wisdom to be added to

the knowledge already acquired. Thus through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, an individual can be raised to the highest levels that the human mind and heart can envision.

I am grateful especially for the restoration of the priesthood, including the same sealing keys promised by Jesus Christ himself to his Apostles that permit loved ones in our day to be sealed as families forever (see Matthew 16:19).

The recognition of and gratitude for blessings received has been a message emphasized not only by the Apostles and prophets of ancient times, but also even in this time by these prophets who are present with us here in the Tabernacle today.

Considering again the admonition of the Apostle Paul, “in every thing give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18), we should be grateful for the blessings which we seek and receive as well as for those blessings that come to us that are beyond our current capacity to comprehend. All is provided by God, who is just, loving, and perfect and will result for our good because “all things work together for good to those that love God” (Romans 8:28).

May human pride and pretensions never arise in us to cause us to imagine in those moments of personal victory or accomplishment that it is by our own merit that we have achieved, but rather may we recognize the hand of God in all things because, as we read in modern scriptures, “in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments” (D&C 59:21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Waldo P. Call

### Naaman and Elisha

In the Old Testament, in 2 Kings, we read of a man by the name of Naaman. He was the “captain of the host of the king of Syria, . . . but he was a leper” (2 Kings 5:1).

An Israelite maid who “waited on Naaman’s wife” said: “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy” (5:2–3).

Captain Naaman, not a member of the Church, accepted this in full faith

and hope. The Syrian king gave him a letter for the king of Israel, and gold, silver, and fine clothing as gifts.

The king of Israel, a man of little faith, was upset about this because he knew he could not heal Naaman, and he said, "See how he seeketh a quarrel against me" (5:7).

"When Elisha the man of God had heard" this, "he sent to the king, saying, . . . let him come . . . to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (5:8).

Naaman went to the prophet. "Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

"Are not . . . rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? . . . So he turned and went away in a rage" (5:10-12).

His pride would not let him follow the prophet's direction. He was going home, and he was leprous still. Could this be because of a proud heart?

His good servants convinced him that he should do as the prophet had said, saying:

"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?

"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (5:13-14).

Naaman was grateful for this and went to the prophet with the gold and silver and fine clothes. But the prophet of God, of course, would not accept payment for the blessings of God.

So Naaman and his company started home. The servant of Elisha, the prophet, found it hard to see these

riches slip from his hands, so he ran after Naaman. Naaman stopped when he saw him coming. The servant said that his master had company and asked for a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.

Naaman was delighted to give them to him and even sent two of his servants to carry them. Before coming to the house of Elisha, the servant stopped and put them in a house. Then he went in to Elisha.

And Elisha said: "Whence comest thou? . . .

"Went not mine heart with thee? . . . Is it a time to receive money? . . .

"The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (5:25-27).

### **Are we following the prophet?**

President Benson, the prophet of God, has counseled us on so many important things. Are we doing them? Or do we say:

"Oh, yes, he is the Lord's prophet, but I don't want to go on a mission."

"I don't want to get married."

"I don't have time to read the Book of Mormon every day. I'm too busy with my work or studies."

"We don't have time for family prayer or home evening."

"But I need to sleep in on Sunday after the big activity. I cannot go to church."

"But Sunday is the only day I have to shop because of my work and studies."

### **Be submissive and do not murmur**

A quote from the sermon of King Benjamin says, "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint

through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, *submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*" (Mosiah 3:19; italics added).

The prophet Lehi said to his son Nephi, "And now, behold thy brothers *murmur*, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord" (1 Nephi 3:5; italics added).

Can you hear President Benson saying, "But behold, I have not told you to go on a mission or marry in the temple; but it is a commandment of the Lord"?

Lehi continues:

"Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast *not murmured*.

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:6-7; italics added).

Do we have the faith of Nephi?

The Lord told his disciples on this continent, "And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; *and if he endureth to the end*, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Nephi 27:16; italics added).

### The Lord will show us the way

My dear brothers and sisters and family, can't you see what we need to do? *Be submissive—do not murmur—endure to the end*. If we will do this, the Lord will show us the way, if we will but follow his prophets and Apostles.

Do not question their direction! It is as simple as that. No, I am not

saying to have blind faith or blind obedience.

Sometimes you may want proof of this doctrine or that saying of the prophet. Keep the commandments! Pray, walk in righteousness, and through the Holy Spirit you can know by that sweet, calm feeling that it is true.

Moroni said, "By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).

We can know by the Spirit that it is right, if, like Nephi, we have faith, are obedient, and keep the commandments.

What if Naaman had let his pride rule him? He would have remained a leper.

Could we take the servant of Elisha as a type for us when we look at riches, worldly things, and the wisdom of men instead of following the prophets? Will we and our descendants be out of the Church or unclean forever more because of disobedience?

The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith, "And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14).

I testify that God, our Heavenly Father, lives. His Son, Jesus Christ, lives, and he is our Savior and Redeemer. This is his church, and he directs it through his prophets. I testify that President Ezra Taft Benson is his prophet; that President Hinckley and President Monson and the Twelve Apostles are worthy prophets and God's servants.

I love my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I love these prophets, Apostles, seers, and revelators. I respect them, I sustain them, and I pray for them.

I love my family; and I love you, my brothers and sisters; and I pray that we will follow the prophets and Apostles and keep the commandments of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

These two dedicated men who have just spoken to us are Elders Helio R. Camargo, who comes from Brazil,

and Waldo P. Call, who comes from the Mormon colonies in Mexico.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

## Elder Boyd K. Packer

### Covenants

It was an experience to hear President Joseph Fielding Smith pray. Even when he was past ninety he would pray that he would “keep his *covenants* and *obligations* and endure to the end.” The word *covenant* is the subject of my message.

The Lord told the ancients, “With thee will I establish my covenant” (Genesis 6:18). He told the Nephites, “Ye are the children of the covenant” (3 Nephi 20:26). And he described the restored gospel as the “*new and . . . everlasting covenant*” (D&C 22:1; italics added). Every Latter-day Saint is under *covenant*. Baptism is a covenant; so is the sacrament. Through it we renew the covenant of baptism and commit to “always remember him and keep his commandments” (D&C 20:77).

### Three dangerous life-styles

My message is to you who are tempted either to promote, to enter, or to remain in a life-style which violates your covenants and will one day bring sorrow to you and to those who love you.

Growing numbers of people now campaign to make spiritually dangerous life-styles legal and socially acceptable. Among them are abortion, the gay-lesbian movement, and drug addiction. They are debated in forums and seminars, in classes, in conversations, in conventions, and in courts all over the world. The social and political aspects of them are in the press every day.

### Moral and spiritual

The point I make is simply this: there is a *MORAL* and *SPIRITUAL* side

to these issues which is universally ignored. For Latter-day Saints, morality is one component which must not be missing when these issues are considered—otherwise sacred covenants are at risk! Keep your covenants and you will be safe. Break them and you will not.

The commandments found in the scriptures, both the positive counsel and the “shalt nots,” form the *letter* of the law. There is also the *spirit* of the law. We are responsible for both.

Some challenge us to show where the scriptures specifically forbid abortion or a gay-lesbian or drug-centered life-style. “If they are so wrong,” they ask, “why don’t the scriptures tell us so in ‘letter of the law’ plainness?” These issues are not ignored in the revelations.\* The scriptures are generally positive rather than negative in their themes, and it is a mistake to assume that anything not specifically prohibited in the “*letter* of the law” is somehow approved of the Lord. All the Lord approves is not detailed in the scriptures; neither is all that is forbidden. The Word of Wisdom, for instance, makes no specific warning against taking arsenic. Surely we don’t need a revelation to tell us that!

The Lord said, “It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same

\* See Genesis 13:13 (footnote 13b); 18:20–22 (footnote 20b); 19:4–9 (footnote 5a); JST, Genesis 19:9–15; Leviticus 18:22, 29; 20:13 (footnote 13a); Deuteronomy 23:17 (footnote 17b); Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9 (footnotes 9e, f); 1 Timothy 1:9–10 (footnote 10b, c).

is a slothful and not a wise servant" (D&C 58:26). The prophets told us in the Book of Mormon that "men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil" (2 Nephi 2:5; see also Helaman 14:31).

Life is meant to be a test to see if we will keep the commandments of God (see 2 Nephi 2:5). We are free to obey or to ignore the spirit and the letter of the law. But the agency granted to man is a *moral* agency (see D&C 101:78). We are not free to break our covenants and escape the consequences.

The laws of God are ordained to make us happy. Happiness cannot coexist with immorality: the prophet Alma told us in profound simplicity that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

### Right of choice

Always when these destructive lifestyles are debated, "*individual right of choice*" is invoked as though it were the one sovereign virtue. That could be true only if there were but one of us. The rights of any individual bump up against the rights of another. And the simple truth is that we cannot be happy, nor saved, nor exalted, without one another.

### Tolerance

The word *tolerance* is also invoked as though it overrules everything else. Tolerance may be a virtue, but it is not *the* commanding one. There is a difference between what one *is* and what one *does*. What one *is* may deserve unlimited tolerance; what one *does*, only a measured amount. A virtue when pressed to the extreme may turn into a vice. Unreasonable devotion to an ideal, without considering the practical application of it, ruins the ideal itself.

### Abortion

Nowhere is the right of choice defended with more vigor than with

abortion. Having chosen to act, and a conception having occurred, it cannot then be unchosen. But there are still choices; always a best one.

Sometimes the covenant of marriage has been broken; more often none was made. In or out of marriage, abortion is not an individual choice. At a minimum, three lives are involved.

The scriptures tell us, "Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do *anything* like unto it" (D&C 59:6; italics added).

Except where the wicked crime of incest or rape was involved, or where competent medical authorities certify that the life of the mother is in jeopardy, or that a severely defective fetus cannot survive birth, abortion is clearly a "thou shalt not." Even in these very exceptional cases, much sober prayer is required to make the right choice.

We face such sobering choices because we are the children of God.

### Man not just an animal

Little do we realize what we have brought upon ourselves when we have allowed our children to be taught that man is only an advanced animal. We have compounded the mistake by neglecting to teach moral and spiritual values. Moral laws do not apply to animals for they have no agency. Where there is agency, where there is choice, moral laws must apply. We cannot, absolutely cannot, have it both ways.

When our youth are taught that they are but animals, they feel free, even compelled, to respond to every urge and impulse. We should not be so puzzled at what is happening to society. We have sown the wind, and now we inherit the whirlwind. The chickens, so the saying goes, are now coming home to roost.

### Gay and lesbian rights

Several publications are now being circulated about the Church which defend and promote gay or lesbian con-



duct. They wrest the scriptures attempting to prove that these impulses are in-born, cannot be overcome, and should not be resisted; and therefore, such conduct has a morality of its own. They quote scriptures to justify perverted acts between consenting adults. That same logic would justify incest or the molesting of little children of either gender. Neither the letter nor the spirit of moral law condones any such conduct.

I hope none of our young people will be foolish enough to accept those sources as authority for what the scriptures mean. Paul, speaking on this very subject, condemned those "who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). In that same reference the word *covenantbreakers* is used for the only time in scripture (see Romans 1:31).

Some choose to reject the scriptures out of hand and forsake their covenants. But they cannot choose to avoid the consequences. That choice is not theirs or ours or anybody's.

All of us are subject to feelings and impulses. Some are worthy and some of them are not; some of them are natural and some of them are not. We are to control them, meaning we are to direct them according to the moral law.

The legitimate union of the sexes is a law of God. The sacred covenants made by husband and wife with God protect the worthy expression of those feelings and impulses which are vital to the continuation of the race and essential to a happy family life. Illicit or perverted conduct leads without exception to disappointment, suffering, to tragedy.

### Local priesthood leaders

We receive letters pleading for help, asking why should some be tormented by desires which lead toward addiction or perversion. They seek desperately for some logical explanation as to why they should have a compelling

attraction, even a predisposition, toward things that are destructive and forbidden.

Why, they ask, does this happen to me? It is not fair! They suppose that it is not fair that others are not afflicted with the same temptations. They write that their bishop could not answer the "why," nor could he nullify their addiction or erase the tendency.

We are sometimes told that leaders in the Church do not really understand these problems. Perhaps we don't. There are many "whys" for which we just do not have simple answers. But we *do* understand temptation. Each of us, from personal experience. Nobody is free from temptations of one kind or another. That is the test of life. That is part of our mortal probation. Temptation of some kind goes with the territory.

What we do know is where these temptations will lead. We have watched these life-styles play themselves out in many lives. We have seen the end of the road you are tempted to follow. It is not likely that a bishop can tell you what causes these conditions or why you are afflicted, nor can he erase the temptation. But he can tell you what is right and what is wrong. If you know right from wrong, you have a place to begin. That is the point at which individual choice becomes operative. That is the point at which repentance and forgiveness can exert great spiritual power.

I believe that most people are drawn into a life of drug addiction or perversion or submit to an abortion without really realizing how morally and spiritually dangerous they are.

### A tempter

Perhaps the worst of all conditions which we can create for ourselves is to become a tempter and lead an innocent one into a life-style that is destructive. The tempter entices others to come out of a "closet," to violate covenants which they have made with God. He promises emancipation and exhilaration without

saying that such a course may be spiritually fatal.

A tempter will claim that such impulses cannot be changed and should not be resisted. Can you think of anything the adversary would rather have us believe?

The Lord warned, "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42).

### Support groups

There are support groups of many kinds which seek to fortify those struggling to withdraw from drug addiction or to master other temptations. On the other hand, there are organizations which do just the opposite. They justify immoral conduct and bind the chains of addiction or perversion ever tighter. Do not affiliate with such an organization. If you have already, withdraw from it.

### Spirit of sympathy and love

Now, in a spirit of sympathy and love, I speak to you who may be struggling against temptations for which there is no moral expression. Some have resisted temptation but never seem to be free from it. Do not yield! Cultivate the spiritual strength to resist—all of your life, if need be.

Some are tortured by thoughts of covenants already forsaken and sometimes think of suicide. Suicide is no solution at all. Do not even think of it. The very fact that you are so disturbed marks you as a spiritually sensitive soul for whom there is great hope.

You may wonder why God does not seem to hear your pleading prayers and erase these temptations. When you know the gospel plan, you will understand that the conditions of our mortal probation require that we be left to choose. That test is the purpose of life. While these addictions may have de-

voured, for a time, your sense of morality or quenched the spirit within you, it is never too late.

You may not be able, simply by choice, to free yourself at once from unworthy feelings. You *can* choose to give up the immoral expression of them.

The suffering you endure from resisting or from leaving a life-style of addiction or perversion is not a hundredth part of that suffered by your parents, your spouse, or your children, if you give up. Theirs is an innocent suffering because they love you. To keep resisting or to withdraw from such a life-style is an act of genuine unselfishness, a sacrifice you place on the altar of obedience. It will bring enormous spiritual rewards.

Remember that agency, that freedom of choice that you demanded when you forsook your covenants? That same agency can now be drawn upon to exert a great spiritual power of redemption.

The love we offer may be a tough love, but it is of the purest kind; and we have more to offer than our love. We can teach you of the cleansing power of repentance. If covenants have been broken, however hard it may be, they may be reinstated, and you can be forgiven. Even for abortion? Yes, even that!

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

God bless you who are struggling to resist or to free yourself from these terrible temptations that now sweep across the world, and from which we are not free in the Church. Bless those who love you and sustain you. There is great cleansing power in the priesthood. There is great cleansing power in the Church. It is a gospel of repentance. He is our Redeemer. Of him I bear witness—Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, who sacrificed himself that we might be clean. And of him I bear witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

As we draw to the conclusion of this great conference, we extend appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Young Women's Choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions, and this great Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music we have had.

We extend our gratitude to city officials for their cooperation; to the Relief Society, doctors, and Church Health Unit nurses who have been on hand to render service; to the ushers and interpreters and all who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on the grounds.

We are grateful to local and national press representatives and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

Now, as you have noted there has been a vacant chair on the stand. We have missed the presence of our beloved leader, President Ezra Taft Benson, who, if he were here, would leave with us his blessing. President Monson will speak in his behalf, and the choir will then sing "Peace I Leave with You," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Albert Choules, Jr., of the Seventy. This conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

## President Thomas S. Monson

There is a loneliness in the empty chair between President Hinckley and me, and we feel it in our hearts. I wish I could take you with President Hinckley and me to President Benson's hospital room, which we visited a few days ago. I think the picture of tranquillity and love which was there would be very beneficial for all members of the Church to see. President Benson lay on his hospital bed, his left hand held by a noble son and his right hand by a beautiful daughter as she read to him from the Book of Mormon. In the background, a recording of Tabernacle Choir music played softly. It was just a little bit of heaven.

As we come to the close of another conference, our spirits have been lifted, our minds inspired, and our souls filled.

The messages delivered at this pulpit have provided words of counsel and guidance for our journey through mortality. The prayers have been offered with humility, and their petitions reflect the feelings of our hearts. The angelic music provided by the choirs at each session has confirmed the Lord's words that "the song of the righteous is a

prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads" (D&C 25:12).

## President Benson's love and service

We sincerely regret that President Ezra Taft Benson has been unable to be with us here in the Tabernacle. Nonetheless, we have felt his spirit throughout the proceedings. His love of the Lord, for the membership of the Church, and for God's children everywhere is legendary. His many acts of kindness have blessed the lives of those with whom he has met everywhere he has gone.

One Friday, he and Sister Benson followed their usual practice of attending a session at the Jordan River Temple. While there, President Benson was approached by a young man who greeted him with joy in his heart and announced that he had been called to fill a full-time mission. President Benson took the newly called missionary by the hand and, with a smile on his lips, declared, "Take me with you! Take me with you!" That missionary testified

that, in a way, he *took* President Benson with him on his mission, since this greeting demonstrated President Benson's abiding love, his devotion to missionary work, and his desire to ever be found in the service of the Lord.

With the rapidly developing changes on the face of Europe, we remember President Benson's great service to the hungry and to the homeless on that continent at the close of World War II. In attendance today is one who was the recipient of such service. She recently wrote to President Benson: "This is the first time in my life that I am here in Salt Lake City to attend general conference. I hope you will remember our first acquaintance in the autumn of 1946 in Langen, Germany. You and I will never forget the remarkable days following the Second World War. We will never forget your help for the refugees in those sad days. Now, forty-four years have gone, and we have both grown older. I wish you happiness and the blessings of the Lord all the days of your life and send you all my love."

### Counsel from President Benson

If President Benson were here at the pulpit at this, the conclusion of the final session of this glorious conference, he would extend to you his love, his admonitions, and his blessing. May I, with President Benson's own words, provide you his counsel:

"Let us be valiant in our testimony of Jesus all the days of our lives" (*Come unto Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], p. 16).

"His word is one of the most valuable gifts He has given us. I urge you to recommit yourselves to a study of the scriptures. Immerse yourselves in them daily so you will have the power of the Spirit to attend you. . . . Read them in your families and teach your children to love and treasure them" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

"It is soul-satisfying to know that God is mindful of us and ready to respond when we place our trust in Him and do that which is right. There is no place for fear among men and women

who place their trust in the Almighty and who do not hesitate to humble themselves in seeking divine guidance through prayer. Though persecutions arise, though reverses come, in prayer we can find reassurance, for God will speak peace to the soul. That peace, that spirit of serenity, is life's greatest blessing" ("Pray Always," *Ensign*, Feb. 1990, p. 5).

He continues: "I am getting older and less vigorous and am so grateful for your prayers and for the support of my younger Brethren. I thank the Lord for renewing my body from time to time so that I can still help build His kingdom. . . . God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, p. 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 6).

### God be with you till we meet again

President Benson is a man of love, and this love he would have me extend to you in his behalf. He has a beautiful voice and has often sung the melodic strains of a favorite hymn:

God be with you till we meet again;  
By his counsels guide, uphold you;  
With his sheep securely fold you.  
God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again;  
When life's perils thick confound  
you,  
Put his arms unfailing round you.  
God be with you till we meet again.  
(*Hymns*, no. 152)

To the membership of the Church and to God's children everywhere, our prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, conveys to you the tender feelings of his heart, his gratitude for your prayers, and his abiding love. God be with you, brothers and sisters, till we meet again, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Peace I Leave with You."

Elder Albert Choules, Jr., offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions, conducted by Julie Hayes Hewlett.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden conducted the choir.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, and Clay Christiansen, Tabernacle organists.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY  
SAINTS